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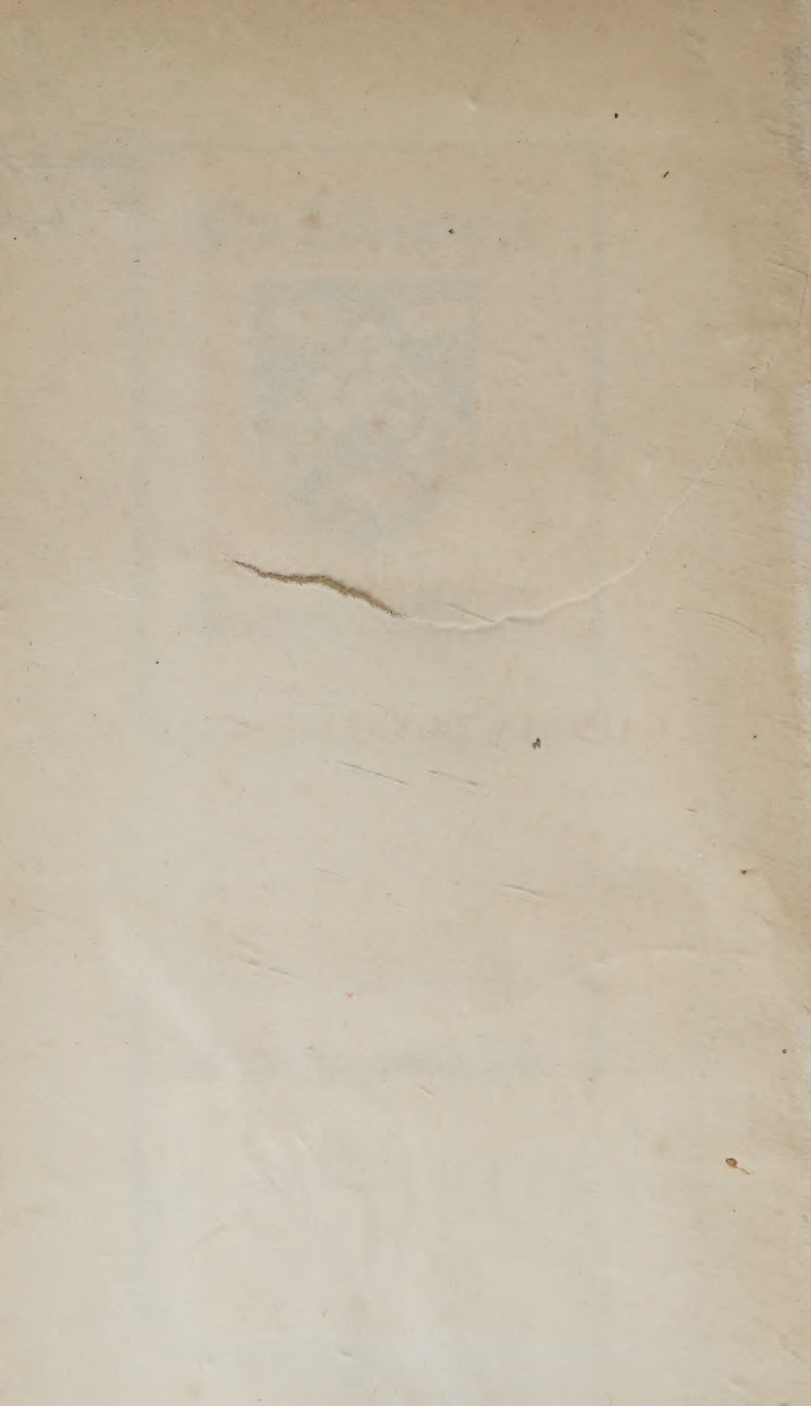
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ADVENTURES
OF
CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE.

ADVENTURES
OF
CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE,
OR
SCENES
BEYOND THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINS OF
THE FAR WEST.

BY WASHINGTON IRVING,

AUTHOR OF

"THE SKETCH BOOK," "THE ALHAMBRA," "ASTORIA," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ADVENTURES

OF

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE.

CHAPTER I.

FORT WALLAH-WALLAH—ITS COMMANDER—INDIANS IN ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD—EXERTIONS OF MR. PAMBRUNE FOR THEIR IMPROVEMENT—RELIGION—CODE OF LAWS—RANGE OF THE LOWER NEZ PERCES—CAMASH AND OTHER ROOTS—NEZ PERCE HORSES—PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE—REFUSAL OF SUPPLIES—DEPARTURE—A LAGGARD AND GLUTTON.

FORT Wallah-Wallah is a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, situated just above the mouth of the river of the same name, and on the left bank of the Columbia. It is built of drift wood, and calculated merely for defence

against any attack of the natives. At the time of Captain Bonneville's arrival, the whole garrison mustered but six or eight men; and the post was under the superintendence of Mr. Pambrune, an agent of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The great post and fort of the company, forming the emporium of its trade on the Pacific, is Fort Vancouver; situated on the right bank of the Columbia, about sixty miles from the sea, and just above the mouth of the Wallamut. To this point, the company removed its establishment from Astoria, in 1821, after its coalition with the North-west Company.

Captain Bonneville and his comrades experienced a polite reception from Mr. Pambrune, the superintendent: for, however hostile the members of the British Company may be to the enterprises of American traders, they have

always manifested great courtesy and hospitality to the traders themselves.

Fort Wallah-Wallah is surrounded by the tribe of the same name, as well as by the Skynses, and the Nez Percés; who bring to it the furs and peltries collected in their hunting expeditions. The Wallah-Wallahs are a degenerate, worn out tribe. The Nez Percés are the most numerous and tractable of the three tribes just mentioned.

Mr. Pambrune informed Captain Bonneville, that he had been at some pains to introduce the Christian religion, in the Roman Catholic form, among them; where it had evidently taken root; but had become altered and modified, to suit their peculiar habits of thought, and motives of action: retaining, however, the principal points of faith, and its entire precepts of morality. The same gentleman had given them a code of laws, to which they conformed

with scrupulous fidelity. Polygamy, which once prevailed among them to a great extent, was now rarely indulged. All the crimes denounced by the Christian faith, met with severe punishment among them. Even theft, so venial a crime among the Indians, had recently been punished with hanging, by sentence of a chief.

There certainly appears to be a peculiar susceptibility of moral and religious improvement among this tribe: and they would seem to be one of the very, very few, that have benefited in morals and manners, by an intercourse with white men. The parties which visited them about twenty years previously, in the expedition fitted out by Mr. Astor, complained of their selfishness, their extortion, and their thievish propensities. The very reverse of those qualities prevailed among them during the prolonged sojourns of Captain Bonneville.

The Lower Nez Percés range upon the Way-lee-way, Immahah, Yenghies, and other of the streams west of the mountains. They hunt the beaver, elk, deer, white bear, and mountain sheep. Beside the flesh of these animals, they use a number of roots for food; some of which would be well worth transplanting and cultivating in the Atlantic states. Among these is the kamash; a sweet root, about the form and size of an onion; and said to be really delicious. The cowish, also, or biscuit root, about the size of a walnut; which they reduce to a very palatable flour: together with the jackap, aisish, quako, and others; which they cook by steaming them in the ground.

In August and September, these Indians keep along the rivers, where they catch and dry great quantities of salmon; which, while they last, are their principal food. In the

winter, they congregate in villages formed of comfortable huts, or lodges, covered with mats. They are generally clad in deer skins, or woollens, and extremely well armed. Above all, they are celebrated for owning great numbers of horses; which they mark, and then suffer to range in droves in their most fertile plains. These horses are principally of the pony breed; but remarkably stout and long winded. They are brought in great numbers to the establishments of the Hudson's Bay Company, and sold for a mere trifle.

Such is the account given by Captain Bonneville, of the Nez Perces; who, if not viewed by him with too impartial an eye, are certainly among the gentlest, and least barbarous people of these remote wildernesses. They invariably signified to him their earnest wish that an American post might be established among them; and repeatedly declared that they would

trade with the Americans, in preference to any other people.

Captain Bonneville had intended to remain some time in this neighbourhood, to form an acquaintance with the natives, and to collect information, and to establish connexions that might be advantageous in the way of trade. The delays, however, which he had experienced on his journey, obliged him to shorten his sojourn, and to set off as soon as possible ; so as to reach the rendezvous at the Portneuf, at the appointed time. He had seen enough to convince him that an American trade might be carried on with advantage in this quarter ; and he determined soon to return with a stronger party, more completely fitted for the purpose.

As he stood in need of some supplies for his journey, he applied to purchase them of Mr. Pambrune ; but soon found the difference between being treated as a guest, or as a rival

trader. The worthy superintendent, who had extended to him all the genial rites of hospitality, now suddenly assumed a withered-up aspect and demeanour, and observed that, however he might feel disposed to serve him, personally, he felt bound by his duty to the Hudson's Bay Company, to do nothing which should facilitate or encourage the visits of other traders among the Indians in that part of the country. He endeavoured to dissuade Captain Bonneville from returning to the Blue mountains; assuring him it would be extremely difficult and dangerous, if not impracticable, at this season of the year; and advised him to accompany Mr. Payette, a leader of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was about to depart with a number of men, by a more circuitous, but safe route: to carry supplies to the company's agent, resident among the Upper Nez Perces.

Captain Bonneville, however piqued at his refusing to furnish him with supplies, and doubting the sincerity of his advice, determined to return by the more direct route through the mountains; though varying his course, in some respects, from that by which he had come, in consequence of information gathered among the neighbouring Indians.

Accordingly, on the 6th of March, he and his three companions, accompanied by their Nez Percé guides, set out on their return. In the early part of their course, they touched again at several of the Nez Percé villages, where they had experienced such kind treatment on their way down. They were always welcomed with cordiality; and every thing was done to cheer them on their journey.

On leaving the Way-lee-way village, they were joined by a Nez Percé, whose society was welcomed on account of the general gratitude

and good-will they felt for his tribe. He soon proved a heavy clog upon the little party; being doltish and taciturn; lazy in the extreme, and a huge feeder. His only proof of intellect was in shrewdly avoiding all labour himself, and availing himself of the toil of others. When on the march, he always lagged behind the rest, leaving to them the task of breaking a way through all difficulties and impediments, and leisurely and lazily jogging along the track, which they had beaten through the snow. At the evening encampment, when others were busy gathering fuel, providing for the horses, and cooking the evening repast, this worthy Sancho of the wilderness would take his seat quietly and cozily by the fire, puffing away at his pipe, and eyeing in silence, but with wistful intensity of gaze, the savoury morsels that were roasting for the supper.

When mealtime arrived, however, then came

is season of activity. He no longer hung back, and waited for others to take the lead, but distinguished himself by a brilliancy of onset, and a sustained vigour and duration of attack, that completely shamed the efforts of his competitors—albeit, experienced trencher-men of no mean prowess. Never had they witnessed such power of mastication, and such marvellous capacity of stomach, as in this native and uncultivated gastronome.

Having, by repeated and prolonged assaults, at length completely gorged himself, he would wrap himself up, and lie with the torpor of an anaconda; slowly digesting his way on to the next repast.

The gormandizing powers of this worthy, were, at first, matters of surprise and merriment to the travellers: but they soon became too serious for a joke; threatening devastation to the fleshpots; and he was regarded askance,

at his meals, as a regular kill-crop, destined to waste the substance of the party.

Nothing but a sense of the obligations they were under to his nation, induced them to bear with such a guest: but he proceeded, speedily, to relieve them from the weight of these obligations, by eating a receipt in full.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNINVITED GUEST—FREE AND EASY MANNERS—SALUTARY JOKES—A PRODIGAL SON—EXIT OF THE GLUTTON—A SUDDEN CHANGE IN FORTUNE—DANGER OF A VISIT TO POOR RELATIONS—PLUCKING OF A PROSPEROUS MAN—A VAGABOND TOILET—A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE VERY FINE HORSE—HARD TRAVELLING—THE UNINVITED GUEST AND THE PATRIARCHAL COLT—A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK—A CATASTROPHE—EXIT OF THE MERRY VAGABOND.

As Captain Bonneville and his men were encamped one evening among the hills near Snake river, seated before their fire, enjoying a hearty supper, they were suddenly surprised by the visit of an uninvited guest. He was a ragged, half-naked Indian hunter, armed with

a bow and arrows, and had the carcass of a fine buck thrown across his shoulder. Advancing with an alert step, and free and easy air, he threw the buck on the ground, and, without waiting for an invitation, seated himself at their mess, helped himself without ceremony, and chatted to the right and left in the liveliest and most unembarrassed manner. No adroit and veteran dinner-hunter of a metropolis could have acquitted himself more knowingly.

The travellers were at first completely taken by surprise, and could not but admire the facility with which this ragged cosmopolite had made himself at home among them. While they stared, he went on, making the most of the good cheer upon which he had so fortunately alighted; and was soon elbow deep in "pot luck," and greased from the tip of his nose to the back of his ears.

As the company recovered from their sur-

prise, they began to feel annoyed at this intrusion. Their uninvited guest, unlike the generality of his tribe, was somewhat dirty as well as ragged, and they had no relish for such a messmate. Heaping up, therefore, an abundant portion of the "provant" upon a piece of bark, which served for a dish, they invited him to confine himself thereto, instead of foraging in the general mess.

He complied with the most accommodating spirit imaginable: and went on eating and chatting, and laughing and smearing himself, until his whole countenance shone with grease and good humour. In the course of his repast, his attention was caught by the figure of the gastronome, who, as usual, was gorging himself in dogged silence. A droll cut of the eye showed either that he knew him of old, or perceived at once his characteristics. He immediately made him the butt of his plea-

santries; and cracked off two or three good hits, that caused the sluggish dolt to prick up his ears, and delighted all the company.

From this time, the uninvited guest was taken into favour: his jokes began to be relished; his careless, free and easy air, to be considered singularly amusing; and in the end, he was pronounced by the travellers one of the merriest companions and most entertaining vagabonds they had met with in the wilderness.

Supper being over, the redoubtable She-wee-she-ouaiter, for such was the simple name by which he announced himself, declared his intention of keeping company with the party for a day or two, if they had no objection; and by way of backing his self-invitation, presented the carcass of the buck as an earnest of his hunting abilities.

By this time, he had so completely effaced

the unfavourable impression made by his first appearance, that he was made welcome to the camp, and the Nez Percé guide undertook to give him lodging for the night. The next morning, at break of day, he borrowed a gun, and was off among the hills, nor was any thing more seen of him until a few minutes after the party had encamped for the evening, when he again made his appearance, in his usual frank, careless manner; and threw down the carcass of another noble deer, which he had borne on his back for a considerable distance.

This evening he was the life of the party, and his open, communicative disposition, free from all disguise, soon put them in possession of his history. He had been a kind of prodigal son in his native village; living a loose, heedless life, and disregarding the precepts and imperative commands of the chiefs. He had, in consequence, been expelled from the village,

but, in nowise disheartened at this banishment, had betaken himself to the society of the border Indians, and had led a careless, haphazard, vagabond life, perfectly consonant to his humours; heedless of the future, so long as he had wherewithal for the present; and fearing no lack of food, so long as he had the implements of the chase, and a fair hunting ground.

Finding him very expert as a hunter, and being pleased with his eccentricities, and his strange and merry humour, Captain Bonneville fitted him out handsomely as the Nimrod of the party, who all soon became quite attached to him. One of the earliest and most signal services he performed, was to exorcise the insatiate kill-crop, that had hitherto oppressed the party. In fact, the doltish Nez Percé who had seemed so perfectly insensible to rough treatment of every kind, by which the travellers had endeavoured to elbow him out of their

society, could not withstand the goodhumoured bantering, and occasionally sharp wit of She-wee-she. He evidently quailed under his jokes, and sat blinking like an owl in daylight, when pestered by the flouts and peckings of mischievous birds.

At length his place was found vacant at meal-time ; no one knew when he went off, or whither he had gone, but he was seen no more, and the vast surplus that remained when the repast was over, showed what a mighty gourmandizer had departed.

Relieved from this incubus, the little party now went on cheerily. She-wee-she kept them in fun as well as food. His hunting was always successful : he was ever ready to render any assistance in the camp or on the march ; while his jokes, his antics, and the very cut of his countenance, so full of whim and comicality, kept every one in good humour.

In this way they journeyed on until they arrived on the banks of the Immahah, and encamped near to the Nez Percés lodges. Here She-wee-she took a sudden notion to visit his people, and show off the state of worldly prosperity to which he had so suddenly attained. He accordingly departed in the morning, arrayed in hunter's style, and well appointed with every thing befitting his vocation. The buoyancy of his gait, the elasticity of his step, and the hilarity of his countenance, showed that he anticipated, with chuckling satisfaction, the surprise he was about to give those who had ejected him from their society in rags.

But what a change was there in his whole appearance when he rejoined the party in the evening! He came skulking into camp like a beaten cur, with his tail between his legs. All his finery was gone; he was naked as when he was born, with the exception of a scanty flap

that answered the purpose of a fig leaf. His fellow travellers at first did not know him, but supposed it to be some vagrant Root Digger sneaking into the camp; but when they recognised in this forlorn object their prime wag, She-wee-she, whom they had seen depart in the morning in such high glee and high feather, they could not contain their merriment, but hailed him with loud and repeated peals of laughter.

She-wee-she was not of a spirit to be easily cast down; he soon joined in the merriment as heartily as any one, and seemed to consider his reverse of fortune an excellent joke. Captain Bonneville, however, thought proper to check his good humour, and demanded, with some degree of sternness, the cause of his altered condition. He replied in the most natural and self-complacent style imaginable, “that he had been among his cousins, who were very poor:

they had been delighted to see him ; still more delighted with his good fortune : they had taken him to their arms ; admired his equipments : one had begged for this ; another for that ”—in fine, what with the poor devil’s inherent heedlessness, and the real generosity of his disposition, his needy cousins had succeeded in stripping him of all his clothes and accoutrements, excepting the fig leaf with which he had returned to camp.

Seeing his total want of care and forethought, Captain Bonneville determined to let him suffer a little in hopes it might prove a salutary lesson ; and, at any rate, to make him no more presents while in the neighbourhood of his needy cousins. He was left, therefore, to shift for himself in his naked condition ; which, however, did not seem to give him any concern, or to abate one jot of his good humour.

In the course of his lounging about the camp,

however, he got possession of a deer skin: whereupon, cutting a slit in the middle, he thrust his head through it, so that the two ends hung down before and behind, something like a South American poncho, or the tabard of a herald. These ends he tied together, under the armpits; and thus arrayed, presented himself once more before the captain, with an air of perfect self-satisfaction, as though he thought it impossible for any fault to be found with his toilet.

A little further journeying brought the travellers to the petty village of Nez Percés, governed by the worthy and affectionate old patriarch who had made Captain Bonneville the costly present of the very fine horse. The old man welcomed them once more to his village with his usual cordiality, and his respectable squaw and hopeful son, cherishing grateful recollections of the hatchet and earbobs, joined in a chorus of friendly gratulation.

As the much-vaunted steed, once the joy and pride of this interesting family, was now nearly knocked up by travelling, and totally inadequate to the mountain scramble that lay ahead, Captain Bonneville restored him to the venerable patriarch, with renewed acknowledgments for the invaluable gift. Somewhat to his surprise, he was immediately supplied with a fine two years old colt in his stead, a substitution which, he afterwards learnt, according to Indian custom in such cases, he might have claimed as a matter of right.

We do not find that any after claims were made on account of this colt. This donation may be regarded, therefore, as a signal punctilio of Indian honour ; but it will be found that the animal soon proved an unlucky acquisition to the party.

While at this village, the Nez Percé guide

had held consultations with some of the inhabitants as to the mountain tract the party were about to traverse. He now began to wear an anxious aspect, and to indulge in gloomy forebodings. The snow, he had been told, lay to a great depth in the passes of the mountains: and difficulties would increase as he proceeded. He begged Captain Bonneville, therefore, to travel very slowly, so as to keep the horses in strength and spirit for the hard times they would have to encounter. The captain surrendered the regulation of the march entirely to his discretion, and pushed on in the advance, amusing himself with hunting, so as generally to kill a deer or two in the course of the day, and arriving, before the rest of the party, at the spot designated by the guide for the evening's encampment.

In the mean time, the others plodded on at the heels of the guide, and accompanied by

that merry vagabond, She-wee-she. The primitive garb worn by this droll, left all his nether man exposed to the biting blasts of the mountains. Still his wit was never frozen, nor his sunshiny temper beclouded; and his innumerable antics and practical jokes, while they quickened the circulation of his own blood, kept his companions in high good humour.

So passed the first day after the departure from the patriarch's. The second day commenced in the same manner; the captain in the advance, the rest of the party following on slowly. She-wee-she, for the greater part of the time, trudged on foot over the snow, keeping himself warm by hard exercise, and all kinds of crazy capers.

In the height of his foolery, the patriarchal colt, which, unbroken to the saddle, was suffered to follow on at large, happened to come within

his reach. In a moment, he was on his back, snapping his fingers, and yelping with delight. The colt, unused to such a burden, and half wild by nature, fell to prancing and rearing and snorting and plunging and kicking; and, at length, set off at full speed over the most dangerous ground.

As the route led generally along the steep and craggy sides of hills, both horse and horseman were constantly in danger, and more than once had a hair-breadth escape from deadly peril. Nothing, however, could daunt this mad-cap savage. He stuck to the colt like a plaster, up ridges, down gullies; whooping and yelping with the wildest glee. Never did beggar on horseback display more headlong horsemanship. His companions followed him with their eyes, sometimes laughing, sometimes holding in their breath at his vagaries, until

they saw the colt make a sudden plunge or start, and pitch his unlucky rider headlong over a precipice.

There was a general cry of horror, and all hastened to the spot. They found the poor fellow lying among the rocks below, sadly bruised and mangled. It was almost a miracle that he had escaped with life. Even in this condition, his merry spirit was not entirely quelled, and he summoned up a feeble laugh at the alarm and anxiety of those who came to his relief. He was extricated from his rocky bed, and a messenger despatched to inform Captain Bonneville of the accident. The latter returned with all speed, and encamped the party at the first convenient spot.

Here the wounded man was stretched upon buffalo skins, and the captain, who officiated on all occasions as doctor and surgeon to the

party, proceeded to examine his wounds. The principal one was a long and deep gash in the thigh, which reached to the bone.

Calling for a needle and thread, the captain now prepared to sew up the wound, admonishing the patient to submit to the operation with becoming fortitude. His gaiety was at an end; he could no longer summon up even a forced smile; and, at the first puncture of the needle, flinched so piteously, that the captain was obliged to pause, and to order him a powerful dose of alcohol. This somewhat rallied up his spirit and warmed his heart; all the time of the operation, however, he kept his eyes riveted on the wound; with his teeth set; and a whimsical wincing of the countenance, that occasionally gave his nose something of its usual comic curl.

When the wound was fairly closed, the captain washed it with rum, and administered

a second dose of the same to the patient, who was tucked in for the night, and advised to compose himself to sleep. He was restless and uneasy, however; repeatedly expressing his fears that his leg would be so much swollen the next day, as to prevent his proceeding with the party; nor could he be quieted, until the captain gave a decided opinion favourable to his wishes.

Early the next morning, a gleam of his merry humour returned, on finding that his wounded limb retained its natural proportions. On attempting to use it, however, he found himself unable to stand. He made several efforts to coax himself into a belief that he might still continue forward; but at length, shook his head despondingly, and said, that "as he had but one leg," it was all in vain to attempt the passage of the mountain.

Every one grieved to part with so boon a companion, and under such disastrous circumstances. He was once more clothed and equipped, each one making him some parting present. He was then helped on a horse, which Captain Bonneville presented to him; and after many parting expressions of goodwill on both sides, set off on his return to his old haunts; doubtless, to be once more plucked by his affectionate but needy cousins.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DIFFICULT MOUNTAIN — A SMOKE AND CONSULTATION — THE
CAPTAIN'S SPEECH — AN ICY TURNPIKE — DANGER OF A FALSE STEP
— ARRIVAL ON SNAKE RIVER — RETURN TO PORTNEUF — MEETING
OF COMRADES.

CONTINUING their journey up the course of the Immahah, the travellers found, as they approached the head waters, the snow increasing in quantity, so as to lie two feet

deep. They were again obliged, therefore, to beat down a path for their horses, sometimes travelling on the icy surface of the stream.

At length they reached the place where they intended to scale the mountain; and, having broken a pathway to the foot, were agreeably surprised to find that the wind had drifted the snow from off the side, so that they attained the summit with but little difficulty. Here they encamped, with the intention of beating a track through the mountains. A short experiment, however, obliged them to give up the attempt, for they found the snow lying in vast drifts, often higher than the horses heads.

Captain Bonneville now took the two Indian guides, and set out to reconnoitre the neighbourhood. Observing a high peak which overtopped the rest, he climbed it, and dis-

covered from the summit a pass about nine miles long, but so heavily piled with snow, that it seemed impracticable. He now lit a pipe, and sitting down with the two guides, proceeded to hold a consultation after the Indian mode. For a long time they all smoked vigorously and in silence, pondering over the subject matter before them.

At length a discussion commenced, and the opinion in which the two guides concurred, was, that the horses could not possibly cross the snows. They advised, therefore, that the party should proceed on foot, and they should take the horses back to the village, where they would be well taken care of until Captain Bonneville should send for them. They urged this advice with great earnestness; declaring that their chief would be extremely angry, and treat them severely, should any of the horses, of his good friends, the white men,

be lost, in crossing under their guidance ; and that, therefore, it was good they should not attempt it.

Captain Bonneville sat smoking his pipe, and listening to them with Indian silence and gravity. When they had finished, he replied to them in their own style of language.

“ My friends,” said he, “ I have seen the pass, and have listened to your words ; you have little hearts. When troubles and dangers lie in your way, you turn your backs. That is not the way with my nation. When great obstacles present, and threaten to keep them back, their hearts swell, and they push forward. They love to conquer difficulties. But enough for the present. Night is coming on : let us return to our camp.”

He moved on, and they followed in silence. On reaching the camp, he found the men ex-

tremely discouraged. One of their number had been surveying the neighbourhood, and seriously assured them, that the snow was at least a hundred feet deep. The Captain cheered them up, and diffused fresh spirit in them by his example. Still he was much perplexed in mind how to proceed. About dark there was a slight drizzling rain.

An expedient now suggested itself. This was to make two light sleds, place the packs on them, and drag them to the other side of the mountain, thus forming a road in the wet snow, which, should it afterwards freeze, would be sufficiently hard to bear the horses. This plan was promptly put into execution; the sleds were constructed, the heavy baggage was drawn backward and forward until the road was beaten, when they desisted from their fatiguing labour.

The night turned out clear and cold, and by

morning, their road was encrusted with ice sufficiently strong for their purpose. They now set out on their icy turnpike, and got on well enough, excepting that now and then a horse would sidle out of the track, and immediately sink up to the neck. Then came on toil and difficulty, and they would be obliged to haul up the floundering animal with ropes. One, more unlucky than the rest, after repeated falls, had to be abandoned in the snow.

Notwithstanding these repeated delays, they succeeded, before the sun had acquired sufficient power to thaw the snow, in getting all the rest of their horses safely to the other side of the mountain.

Their difficulties and dangers, however, were not yet at an end. They had now to descend, and the whole surface of the snow was glazed with ice. It was necessary, therefore, to wait until the warmth of the sun should melt the

glassy crust of sleet, and give them a foothold in the yielding snow. They had a frightful warning of the danger of any movement while the sleet remained. A wild young mare, in her restlessness, strayed to the edge of a declivity. One slip was fatal to her; she lost her balance, careered with headlong velocity down the slippery side of the mountain for more than two thousand feet, and was dashed to pieces at the bottom. When the travellers afterwards sought the carcass to cut it up for food, they found it torn and mangled in the most horrible manner.

It was quite late in the evening before the party descended to the ultimate skirts of the snow. Here they planted large logs below them to prevent their sliding down, and encamped for the night. The next day they succeeded in bringing down all their baggage to the encampment; then packing all up regularly, and loading their horses, they once more

set out briskly and cheerfully, and in the course of the following day succeeded in getting to a grassy region.

Here their Nez Percé guides declared that all the difficulties of the mountains were at an end, and their course was plain and simple, and needed no further guidance ; they asked leave, therefore, to return home. This was readily granted, with many thanks and presents for their faithful services. They took a long farewell smoke with their white friends, after which, they mounted their horses and set off, exchanging many farewells and kind wishes.

On the following day, Captain Bonneville completed his journey down the mountain, and encamped on the borders of Snake river, where he found the grass in great abundance, and eight inches in height. In this neighbourhood, he saw on the rocky banks of the river several

prismoids of basaltes, rising to the height of fifty or sixty feet.

Nothing particularly worthy of note occurred during several days, as the party proceeded up along Snake river and across its tributary streams. After crossing Gun creek, they met with various signs that white people were in the neighbourhood, and Captain Bonneville made earnest exertions to discover whether they were any of his own people, that he might join them. He soon ascertained that they had been starved out of this tract of country, and had betaken themselves to the buffalo region, whither he now shaped his course.

In proceeding along Snake river, he found small hordes of Shoshonies lingering upon the the minor streams, and living upon trout and other fish, which they catch in great numbers at this season in "fish traps." The greater

part of the tribe, however, had penetrated the mountains to hunt the elk, deer, and ahsahta, or bighorn.

On the 12th of May, Captain Bonneville reached the Portneuf river, in the vicinity of which he had left the winter encampment of his company on the preceding Christmas day. He had then expected to be back by the beginning of March, but circumstances had detained him upwards of two months beyond the time, and the winter encampment must long ere this have been broken up.

Halting on the banks of the Portneuf, he despatched scouts a few miles above, to visit the old camping ground and search for signals of the party, or of their whereabouts, should they actually have abandoned the spot. They returned without being able to ascertain any thing.

Being now destitute of provisions, the travellers found it necessary to make a short hunting excursion after buffalo. They made caches, therefore, in an island in the river, in which they deposited all their baggage, and then set out on their expedition. They were so fortunate as to kill a couple of fine bulls, and cutting up the carcasses, determined to husband this stock of provisions with the most miserly care, lest they should again be obliged to venture into the open and dangerous hunting grounds.

Returning to their island on the 18th of May, they found that the wolves had been at the caches, scratched up the contents, and scattered them in every direction. They now constructed a more secure one, in which they deposited their heaviest articles, and then descended Snake river again, and encamped just above the American falls.

Here they proceeded to fortify themselves, intending to remain here, and give their horses an opportunity to recruit their strength with good pasturage, until it should be time to set out for the annual rendezvous in Bear river valley.

On the 1st of June, they descried four men on the other side of the river, opposite to the camp, and, having attracted their attention by a discharge of rifles, ascertained to their joy that they were some of their own people.

From these men, Captain Bonneville learnt, that the whole party which he had left in the preceding month of December, were encamped on Blackfoot river, a tributary of Snake river, not very far above the Portneuf. Thither he proceeded with all possible despatch, and in a little while had the pleasure of finding himself once more surrounded by his people, who

greeted his return among them in the heartiest manner; for his long-protracted absence had convinced them that he and his three companions had been cut off by some hostile tribe.

The party had suffered much during his absence. They had been pinched by famine and almost starved, and had been forced to repair to the caches at Salmon river. Here they fell in with the Blackfeet bands, and considered themselves fortunate in being able to retreat from the dangerous neighbourhood without sustaining any loss.

Being thus reunited, a general treat from Captain Bonneville to his men was a matter of course. Two days, therefore, were given up to such feasting and merriment as their means and situation afforded. What was wanting in good cheer was made up in good-will; the free

trappers in particular, distinguished themselves on the occasion, and the saturnalia was enjoyed with a hearty holiday spirit, that smacked of the game flavour of the wilderness.

CHAPTER IV.

DEPARTURES FOR THE RENDEZVOUS—A WAR PARTY OF BLACKFEET—
A MOCK BUSTLE—SHAM FIRES AT NIGHT—WARLIKE PRECAUTIONS
—DANGERS OF A NIGHT ATTACK—A PANIC AMONG HORSES—CAU-
TIOUS MARCH—THE BEER SPRINGS—A MOCK CAROUSAL—SKIR-
MISHING WITH BUFFALOES—A BUFFALO BAIT—ARRIVAL AT THE
RENDEZVOUS—MEETING OF VARIOUS BANDS.

AFTER the two days of festive indulgence, Captain Bonneville broke up the encampment, and set out with his motley party of hired and free trappers, half-breeds, Indians, and squaws, for the main rendezvous in Bear river valley.

Directing his course up the Blackfoot river, he soon reached the hills among which it takes its rise. Here, while on the march, he descried from the brow of a hill, a war party of about sixty Blackfeet, on the plain immediately below him. His situation was perilous; for the greater part of his people were dispersed in various directions. Still, to betray hesitation or fear, would be to discover his actual weakness, and to invite attack. He assumed, instantly, therefore, a belligerent tone; ordered the squaws to lead the horses to a small grove of ashen trees, and unload and tie them; and caused a great bustle to be made by his scanty handful; the leaders riding hither and thither, and vociferating with all their might, as if a numerous force was getting under way for an attack.

To keep up the deception as to his force, he ordered, at night, a number of extra fires to be

made in his camp, and kept up a vigilant watch. His men were all directed to keep themselves prepared for instant action. In such cases, the experienced trapper sleeps in his clothes, with his rifle beside him, the shotbelt and powderflask on the stock ; so that, in case of alarm, he can lay his hand upon the whole of his equipment at once, and start up, completely armed.

Captain Bonneville was also especially careful to secure the horses, and set a vigilant guard upon them ; for there lies the great object, and principal danger of a night attack. The grand move of the lurking savage, is to cause a panic among the horses. In such cases, one horse frightens another, until all are alarmed, and struggle to break loose.

In camps where there are great numbers of Indians, with their horses, a night alarm of the kind is tremendous. The running of the horses

that have broken loose ; the snorting, stamping, and roaring of those that remain fast ; the howling of dogs ; the yelling of Indians ; the scampering of white men, and red men with their guns ; the overturning of lodges, and trampling of fires by the horses ; the flashes of the fires, lighting up forms of men and steeds dashing through the gloom ; altogether make up one of the wildest scenes of confusion imaginable. In this way, sometimes, all the horses of a camp, amounting to several hundred, will be frightened off in a single night.

The night passed off without any disturbance ; but there was no likelihood that a war party of Blackfeet, once on the track of a camp where there was a chance for spoils, would fail to hover around it. The captain, therefore, continued to maintain the most vigilant precautions ; throwing out scouts in the advance, and on every rising ground.

In the course of the day he arrived at the plain of white clay, already mentioned, surrounded by the mineral springs, called Beer springs by the trappers.* Here, the men all halted to have a regale. In a few moments, every spring had its jovial knot of hard drinkers, with tin cup in hand, indulging in a mock carouse; quaffing, pledging, toasting, bandying

* In a manuscript journal of Captain Nathaniel G. Wyeth, we find the following mention of this watering-place :

“ There is here a soda spring ; or, I may say, fifty of them. These springs throw out lime, which deposits and forms little hillocks of a yellowish coloured stone. There is, also, here, a warm spring, which throws out water, with a jet : which is like bilge water in taste. There are, also, here, peat beds, which sometimes take fire, and leave behind a deep, light ashes ; in which animals sink deep.
* * * I ascended a mountain, and from it could see that Bear river took a short turn round Sheep rock. There were, in the plain, many hundred mounds of yellowish stone, with a crater on the top, formed of the deposits of the impregnated water.”

jokes, singing drinking songs, and uttering peals of laughter, until it seemed as if their imaginations had given potency to the beverage, and cheated them into a fit of intoxication. Indeed, in the excitement of the moment, they were loud and extravagant in their commendations of "the mountain tap;" elevating it above every beverage produced from hops or malt.

It was a singular and fantastic scene ; suited to a region where every thing is strange and peculiar : — These groups of trappers, and hunters, and Indians, with their wild costumes, and wilder countenances ; their boisterous gaiety, and reckless air ; quaffing, and making merry round these sparkling fountains ; while beside them lay their weapons, ready to be snatched up for instant service. Painters are fond of representing banditti, at their rude and picturesque carousals : but here were groups, still more rude and picturesque ; and it

needed but a sudden onset of Blackfeet, and a quick transition from a fantastic revel to a furious *melée*, to have rendered this picture of a trapper's life complete.

The beer frolic, however, passed off without any untoward circumstance; and, unlike most drinking bouts, left neither headache, nor heartache, behind. Captain Bonneville now directed his course up along Bear river; amusing himself, occasionally, with hunting the buffalo, with which the country was covered. Sometimes, when he saw a huge bull taking his repose in a prairie, he would steal along a ravine, until close upon him; then rouse him from his meditations with a pebble, and take a shot at him as he started up. Such is the quickness with which this animal springs upon his legs, that it is not easy to discover the muscular process by which it is effected. The horse rises first upon his

fore legs; and the domestic cow, upon her hinder limbs; but the buffalo bounds at once from a couchant to an erect position, with a celerity that baffles the eye. Though from his bulk, and rolling gait, he does not appear to run with much swiftness; yet, it takes a staunch horse to overtake him, when at full speed on level ground: and a buffalo cow is still fleeter in her motion.

Among the Indians and half-breeds of the party, were several admirable horsemen and bold hunters; who amused themselves with a grotesque kind of buffalo bait. Whenever they found a huge bull in the plains, they prepared for their teasing and barbarous sport.

Surrounding him on horseback, they would discharge their arrows at him in quick succession, goading him to make an attack; which, with a dexterous movement of the horse, they would easily avoid. In this way, they hovered

round him, feathering him with arrows, as he reared and plunged about, until he was bristled all over like a porcupine. When they perceived in him signs of exhaustion, and he could no longer be provoked to make battle, they would dismount from their horses, approach him in the rear, and seizing him by the tail, jerk him from side to side, and drag him backwards; until the frantic animal, gathering fresh strength from fury, would break from them, and rush, with flashing eyes and a hoarse bellowing, upon any enemy in sight; but in a little while, his transient excitement at an end, would pitch headlong on the ground, and expire. The arrows were then plucked forth, the tongue cut out and preserved as a dainty, and the carcass left a banquet for the wolves.

Pursuing his course up Bear river, Captain Bonneville arrived, on the 13th of June, at the Little Snake lake; where he encamped for four

or five days, that he might examine its shores and outlets. The latter, he found extremely muddy, and so surrounded by swamps and quagmires, that he was obliged to construct canoes of rushes, with which to explore them. The mouths of all the streams which fall into this lake from the west, are marshy and inconsiderable: but on the east side, there is a beautiful beach, broken, occasionally, by high and isolated bluffs, which advance upon the lake, and heighten the character of the scenery. The water is very shallow, but abounds with trout and other small fish.

Having finished his survey of the lake, Captain Bonneville proceeded on his journey, until on the banks of the Bear river, some distance higher up, he came upon the party which he had detached a year before, to circumambulate the Great Salt lake, and ascertain its extent, and the nature of its shores. They had been

encamped here about twenty days; and were greatly rejoiced at meeting once more with their comrades, from whom they had so long been separated.

The first inquiry of Captain Bonneville, was about the result of their journey, and the information they had procured as to the Great Salt lake; the object of his intense curiosity and ambition. The substance of their report will be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V.

PLAN OF THE SALT LAKE EXPEDITION—GREAT SANDY DESERTS—
SUFFERINGS FROM THIRST—OGDEN'S RIVER—TRAILS AND SMOKE
OF LURKING SAVAGES—THEFTS AT NIGHT—A TRAPPER'S REVENGE
—ALARMS OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE—A MURDEROUS VICTORY—
CALIFORNIAN MOUNTAINS—PLAINS ALONG THE PACIFIC—ARRIVAL
AT MONTEREY—ACCOUNT OF THE PLACE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD—
LOWER CALIFORNIA—ITS EXTENT—THE PENINSULA—SOIL—CLI-
MATE—PRODUCTION—ITS SETTLEMENT BY THE JESUITS—THEIR
SWAY OVER THE INDIANS—THEIR EXPULSION—RUINS OF A MIS-
SIONARY ESTABLISHMENT—SUBLIME SCENERY—UPPER CALIFORNIA
—MISSIONS—THEIR POWER AND POLICY—RESOURCES OF THE
COUNTRY—DESIGNS OF FOREIGN NATIONS.

It was on the 24th of July, in the preceding year (1833), that the brigade of forty men set out from Green river valley, to explore the

Great Salt lake. They were to make the complete circuit of it, trapping on all the streams which should fall in their way, and to keep journals and make charts, calculated to impart a knowledge of the lake and the surrounding country.

All the resources of Captain Bonneville had been tasked to fit out this favourite expedition. The country lying to the south-west of the mountains, and ranging down to California, was as yet almost unknown; being out of the buffalo range, it was untraversed by the trapper; who preferred those parts of the wilderness where the roaming herds of that species of animal gave him comparatively an abundant and luxurious life. Still it was said the deer, the elk, and the bighorn were to be found there, so that, with a little diligence and economy, there was no danger of lacking food.

As a precaution, however, the party halted on Bear river, and hunted for a few days, until they had laid in a supply of dried buffalo meat and venison; they then passed by the head waters of the Cassie river, and soon found themselves launched on an immense sandy desert. Southwardly, on their left, they beheld the Great Salt lake, spread out like a sea, but they found no stream running into it. A desert extended around them and stretched to the south west, as far as their eye could reach, rivalling the deserts of Asia and Africa in sterility. There was neither tree, nor herbage, nor spring nor pool, nor running stream, nothing but parched wastes of sand, where horse and rider were in danger of perishing.

Their sufferings, at length, became so great that they abandoned their intended course, and made towards a range of snowy mountains, brightening in the north, where they hoped to

find water. After a time, they came upon a small stream leading directly towards these mountains.

Having quenched their burning thirst, and refreshed themselves and their weary horses for a time, they kept along this stream, which gradually increased in size, being fed by numerous brooks. After approaching the mountains, it took a sweep towards the southwest, and the travellers still kept along it, trapping beaver as they went, on the flesh of which they subsisted for the present, husbanding their dry meat for future necessities.

The stream on which they had thus fallen is called by some Mary River, but is more generally known as Ogden's river, from Mr. Peter Ogden, an enterprising and intrepid leader of the Hudson's Bay Company, who first explored it. The wild and half desert region through which the travellers were

passing, are wandered over by hordes of Shoshokoes, or Root Diggers, the forlorn branch of the Snake tribe. They are a shy people, prone to keep aloof from the stranger. The traveller frequently met with their trails, and saw the smoke of their fires rising in various parts of the vast landscape, so that they knew there were great numbers in the neighbourhood, but scarcely ever were any of them to be met with.

After a time, they began to have vexatious proofs that, if the Shoshokoes were quiet by day, they were busy at night. The camp was dogged by the eavesdroppers ; scarce a morning but various articles were missing, yet nothing could be seen of the marauders. What particularly exasperated the hunters, was to have their traps stolen from the streams.

One morning, a trapper of a violent and savage character, discovering that his traps had

been carried off in the night, took a horrid oath to kill the first Indian he should meet, innocent or guilty. As he was returning with his comrades to camp, he beheld two unfortunate Diggers, seated on the river bank, fishing. Advancing upon them, he levelled his rifle, shot one upon the spot, and flung his bleeding body into the stream. The other Indian fled, and was suffered to escape. Such is the indifference with which acts of violence are regarded in the wilderness, and such the immunity an armed ruffian enjoys beyond the barriers of the laws, that the only punishment this desperado met with, was a rebuke from the leader of the party.

The trappers now left the scene of this infamous tragedy, and kept on westward, down the course of the river, which wound along with a range of mountains on the right hand, and a sandy, but somewhat fertile plain, on the

left. As they proceeded, they beheld columns of smoke rising, as before, in various parts of the country, which their guilty consciences now converted into alarm signals, to arouse the country and collect the scattered bands for vengeance.

After a time the natives began to make their appearance, and sometimes, in considerable numbers, but always pacific; the trappers, however, suspected them of deep laid plans to draw them into ambuscades; to crowd into and get possession of their camp, and various other crafty and daring conspiracies, which it is probable, never entered into the heads of the poor savages. In fact, they are a simple, timid, inoffensive race, unpractised in warfare, and scarce provided with any weapons, excepting for the chase. Their lives are past in the great sand plains and along the adjacent rivers; they subsist sometimes on fish, at

other times on roots and the seeds of a plant, called the cat's-tail. They are of the same kind of people that Captain Bonneville found upon Snake river, and whom he found so mild and inoffensive.

The trappers, however, had persuaded themselves that they were making their way through a hostile country, and though there was no overt act of hostility, yet that implacable foes hung round their camp or beset their path, watching for an opportunity to surprise them.

At length, one day they came to the banks of a stream emptying into Ogden's river, which they were obliged to ford. Here a great number of Shoshokoes were posted on the opposite bank. Persuaded they were there with hostile intent, they advanced upon them, levelled their rifles, and killed twenty-five of them upon the spot. The rest fled to a short distance, then halted and turned about, howling and whin-

ing like wolves, and uttering most piteous wailings.

The trappers chased them in every direction; the poor wretches made no defence, but fled with terror; neither does it appear from the accounts of the boasted victors, that a weapon had been wielded or a weapon launched by the Indians throughout the affair. We feel perfectly convinced that the poor savages had no hostile intention, but had merely gathered together through motives of curiosity, as others of their tribe had done when Captain Bonnevillle and his companions passed along Snake river.

The trappers continued down Ogden's river, until they ascertained that it lost itself in a great swampy lake, to which there was no apparent discharge. They then struck directly westward, across the great chain of Califor-

nian mountains intervening between these interior plains and the shores of the Pacific.

For three and twenty days they were entangled among these mountains, the peaks and ridges of which are in many places covered with perpetual snow. Their passes and defiles present the wildest scenery, partaking of the sublime rather than the beautiful, and abounding with frightful precipices.

The sufferings of the travellers among these savage mountains were extreme : for a part of the time they were nearly starved ; at length, they made their way through them, and came down upon the plains of New California, a fertile region extending along the coast, with magnificent forests, verdant savannas, and prairies that look like stately parks. Here they found deer and other game in abundance, and indemnified themselves for past famine.

They now turned towards the south, and passing numerous small bands of natives, posted upon various streams, arrived at the Spanish village and post of Monterey.

This is a small place, containing about two hundred houses, situated in latitude about 37° north. It has a capacious bay, with indifferent anchorage. The surrounding country is extremely fertile, especially in the valleys; the soil is richer, the further you penetrate into the interior, and the climate is described as a perpetual spring. Indeed, all California, extending along the Pacific ocean from latitude $19^{\circ} 30'$ to 42° north, is represented as one of the most fertile and beautiful regions in North America.

Lower California, in length about seven hundred miles, forms a great peninsula, which crosses the tropics and terminates in the torrid zone. It is separated from the mainland by

the Gulf of California, sometimes called the Vermilion sea ; into this gulf empties the Colorado of the west, the Seeds-ke-dee, or Green river, as it is also sometimes called. The peninsula is traversed by stern and barren mountains, and has many sandy plains, where the only signs of vegetation is the cylindrical cactus growing among the clefts of the rocks.

Wherever there is water, however, and vegetable mould, the ardent nature of the climate quickens every thing into astonishing fertility. There are valleys luxuriant with the rich and beautiful productions of the tropics. There the sugar cane and indigo plant attain a perfection unequalled in any other part of North America. There flourish the olive, the fig, the date, the orange, the citron, the pomegranate, and other fruits belonging to the voluptuous climates of the south ; with grapes in abundance, that

yield a generous wine. In the interior are salt plains; silver mines and scanty veins of gold are said, likewise, to exist; and pearls of a beautiful water are to be fished upon the coast.

The peninsula of California was settled in 1698, by the Jesuits, who, certainly, as far as the natives were concerned, have generally proved the most beneficent of colonists. In the present instance, they gained and maintained a footing in the country without the aid of military force, but solely by religious influence. They formed a treaty, and entered into the most amicable relations with the natives, then numbering from twenty-five to thirty thousand souls, and gained a hold upon their affections, and a control over their minds, that effected a complete change in their condition. They built eleven missionary establishments in the various valleys of the peninsula,

which formed rallying places for the surrounding savages, where they gathered together as sheep into the fold, and surrendered themselves and their consciences into the hands of these spiritual pastors. Nothing, we are told, could exceed the implicit and affectionate devotion of the Indian converts to the Jesuit fathers; and the Catholic faith was disseminated widely through the wilderness.

The growing power and influence of the Jesuits in the new world, at length excited the jealousy of the Spanish government, and they were banished from the colonies. The governor, who arrived at California to expel them, and to take charge of the country, expected to find a rich and powerful fraternity, with immense treasures hoarded in their missions, and an army of Indians ready to defend them. On the contrary, he beheld a few venerable silver-haired priests coming humbly forward to

meet him, followed by a throng of weeping, but submissive natives. The heart of the governor, it is said, was so touched by this unexpected sight, that he shed tears; but he had to execute his orders.

The Jesuits were accompanied to the place of their embarkation by their simple and affectionate parishioners, who took leave of them with tears and sobs. Many of the latter abandoned their hereditary abodes, and wandered off to join their southern brethren, so that, but a remnant remained in the peninsula.

The Franciscans immediately succeeded the Jesuits, and subsequently the Dominicans; but the latter managed their affairs ill. But two of the missionary establishments are at present occupied by priests; the rest are all in ruins, excepting one, which remains a monument of the former power and prosperity of the order. This is a noble edifice, once

the seat of the chief of the resident Jesuits. It is situated in a beautiful valley, about half way between the Gulf of California and the broad ocean, the peninsula being here about sixty miles wide. The edifice is of hewn stone, one story high, two hundred and ten feet in front, and about fifty-five feet deep. The walls are six feet thick, and sixteen feet high, with a vaulted roof of stone, about two feet and a half in thickness. It is now abandoned and desolate; the beautiful valley is without an inhabitant—not a human being resides within thirty miles of the place!

In approaching this deserted mission house from the south, the traveller passes over the mountain of San Juan, supposed to be the highest peak in the Californias. From this lofty eminence, a vast and magnificent prospect unfolds itself; the great gulf of Cali-

fornia, with the dark blue sea beyond, studded with islands; and in another direction the immense lava plain of San Gabriel. The splendour of the climate gives an Italian effect to the immense prospect. The sky is of a deep blue colour, and the sunsets are often magnificent beyond description. Such is a slight and imperfect sketch of this remarkable peninsula.

Upper California extends from latitude $31^{\circ} 10'$ to 42° on the Pacific, and inland, to the great chain of the snow-capped mountains which divide it from the sand plains of the interior.

There are about twenty-one missions in this province, most of which were established about fifty years since, and are generally under the care of these Franciscans. These exert a protecting sway over about thirty-five thousand Indian converts, who reside

on the lands around the mission houses. Each of these houses has fifteen miles square of land allotted to it, subdivided into small lots, proportioned to the number of Indian converts attached to the mission. Some are enclosed with high walls ; but in general they are open hamlets, composed of rows of huts, built of sunburnt bricks ; in some instances whitewashed and roofed with tiles. Many of them are far in the interior, beyond the reach of all military protection, and dependant entirely on the good-will of the natives, which never fails them.

They have made considerable progress in teaching the Indians the useful arts. There are native tanners, shoemakers, weavers, blacksmiths, stonecutters, and other artificers attached to each establishment. Others are taught husbandry, and the rearing of cattle and horses ; while the females card

and spin wool, weave, and perform the other duties allotted to their sex in civilized life.

No social intercourse is allowed between the unmarried of the opposite sexes after working hours; and at night they are locked up in separate apartments, and the keys delivered to the priests.

The produce of the lands, and all the profits arising from sales, are entirely at the disposal of the priests; whatever is not required for the support of the missions, goes to augment a fund which is under their control. Hides and tallow constitute the principal riches of the missions, and, indeed, the main commerce of the country. Grain might be produced to an unlimited extent at the establishments, were there a sufficient market for it. Olives and grapes are also reared at the missions.

Horses and horned cattle abound throughout all this region; the former may be purchased at from three to five dollars, but they are of an inferior breed. Mules, which are here of a large size and of valuable qualities, cost from seven to ten dollars.

There are several excellent ports along this coast. San Diego, San Barbara, Monterey, the bay of San Francisco, and the northern port of Bondago; all afford anchorage for ships of the largest class.

The port of San Francisco is too well known to require much notice in this place. The entrance from the sea is sixty-seven fathoms deep, and within, whole navies might ride in perfect safety. Two large rivers which take their rise in mountains two or three hundred miles to the east, and run through a country unsurpassed for soil and climate, empty themselves into the harbour. The

country around affords admirable timber for ship building. In a word, this favoured port combines advantages which not only fit it for a grand naval depôt, but almost render it capable of being rendered the dominant military post of these seas.

Such is a feeble outline of the Californian coast and country: the value of which is more and more attracting the attention of naval powers. The Russians have always a ship of war upon this station, and have already encroached upon the Californian boundaries, by taking possession of the port of Bondago, and fortifying it with several guns.

Recent surveys have likewise been made, both by the Russians and the English; and we have little doubt, that at no very distant day, this neglected, and, until recently, almost unknown region, will be found to possess

sources of wealth sufficient to sustain a powerful and prosperous empire.

Its inhabitants themselves, are but little aware of its real riches; they have not enterprise sufficient to acquaint themselves with a vast interior, that lies almost a *terra incognita*; nor have they the skill and industry to cultivate properly the fertile tracts along the coast; nor to prosecute that foreign commerce, which brings all the resources of a country into profitable action.

CHAPTER VI.

GAY LIFE AT MONTEREY—MEXICAN HORSEMEN—A BOLD DRAGOON
—USE OF THE LASO—VAQUEROS—NOOSING A BEAR—FIGHT BE-
TWEEN A BULL AND A BEAR—DEPARTURE FROM MONTEREY—
INDIAN HORSE STEALERS—OUTRAGES COMMITTED BY THE TRAVEL-
LERS—INDIGNATION OF CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE.

THE wandering band of trappers were well received at Monterey: the inhabitants were desirous of retaining them among them; and offered extravagant wages to such as were acquainted with any mechanic art. When they

went into the country, too, they were kindly treated by the priests at the missions ; who are always hospitable to strangers, whatever may be their rank or religion. They had no lack of provisions : being permitted to kill as many as they pleased of the vast herds of cattle that graze the country, on condition, merely, of rendering the hides to the owners. They attended bull-fights, and horse-races ; forgot all the purposes of their expedition ; squandered away, freely, the property that did not belong to them ; and, in a word, revelled in a perfect fool's paradise.

What especially delighted them, was the equestrian skill of the Californians. The vast number and the cheapness of the horses in this country, makes every one a cavalier. The Mexicans and half-breeds of California, spend the greater part of their time in the saddle. They are fearless riders ; and their daring feats

upon unbroken colts and wild horses, astonished our trappers; though accustomed to the bold riders of the prairies.

A Mexican horseman has much resemblance, in many points, to the equestrians of Old Spain; and especially to the vainglorious Caballero of Andalusia. A Mexican dragoon, for instance, is represented as arrayed in a round blue jacket, with red cuffs and collar; blue velvet breeches, unbuttoned at the knees to show his white stockings; bottinas of deer skin; a round-crowned Andalusian hat, and his hair queued. On the pommel of his saddle, he carries balanced a long musket, with fox skin round the lock. He is cased in a cuirass of double-fold deer skin, and carries a bull's hide shield: he is forked in a Moorish saddle, high before and behind: his feet are thrust into wooden-box stirrups, of Moorish fashion, and a tremendous pair of iron spurs,

fastened by chains, jingle at his heels. Thus equipped, and suitably mounted, he considers himself the glory of California, and the terror of the universe.

The California horsemen seldom ride out without the laso; that is to say, a long coil of cord, with a slip noose; with which they are expert, almost to a miracle. The laso, now almost entirely confined to Spanish America, is said to be of great antiquity; and to have come, originally, from the east. It was used, we are told, by a pastoral people of Persian descent; of whom eight thousand accompanied the army of Xerxes. By the Spanish Americans, it is used for a variety of purposes; and among others, for hauling wood. Without dismounting, they cast the noose round a log, and thus drag it to their houses. The vaqueros, or Indian cattle-drivers, have also learnt the use of the laso from the Spaniards; and em-

ploy it to catch the half-wild cattle, by throwing it round their horns.

The laso is also of great use in furnishing the public with a favourite, though barbarous sport; the combat between a bear and a wild bull. For this purpose, three or four horsemen sally forth to some wood, frequented by bears, and, depositing the carcass of a bullock, hide themselves in the vicinity. The bears are soon attracted by the bait. As soon as one, fit for their purpose, makes his appearance, they run out, and with the laso, dexterously noose him by either leg. After dragging him at full speed until he is fatigued, they secure him more effectually; and tying him on the carcass of the bullock, draw him in triumph to the scene of action. By this time, he is exasperated to such frenzy, that they are sometimes obliged to throw cold water on him, to moderate his fury: and dangerous would it be, for

horse and rider, were he, while in this paroxysm, to break his bonds.

A wild bull, of the fiercest kind, which has been caught and exasperated in the same manner, is now produced; and both animals are turned loose in the arena of a small amphitheatre. The mortal fight begins instantly; and always, at first to the disadvantage of bruin; fatigued, as he is, by his previous rough riding. Roused, at length, by the repeated goring of the bull, he seizes his muzzle with his sharp claws, and cling to this most sensitive part, causes him to bellow with rage and agony. In his heat and fury, the bull lolls out his tongue; this is instantly clutched by the bear: with a desperate effort he overturns his huge antagonist; and then despatches him without difficulty.

Beside this diversion, the travellers were likewise regaled with bullfights, in the genuine

style of Old Spain; the Californians being considered the best bullfighters in the Mexican dominions.

After a considerable sojourn at Monterey, spent in these very edifying, but not very profitable amusements, the leader of this vagabond party set out with his comrades, on his return journey. Instead of retracing their steps through the mountains, they passed round their southern extremity, and, crossing a range of low hills, found themselves in the sandy plains south of Ogden's river; in traversing which, they again suffered, grievously, for want of water.

In the course of their journey, they encountered a party of Mexicans in pursuit of a gang of natives, who had been stealing horses. The savages of this part of California are represented as extremely poor, and armed only with

stone-pointed arrows; it being the wise policy of the Spaniards not to furnish them with fire-arms. As they find it difficult, with their blunt shafts, to kill the wild game of the mountains, they occasionally supply themselves with food, by entrapping the Spanish horses. Driving them stealthily into fastnesses and ravines, they slaughter them without difficulty, and dry their flesh for provisions. Some they carry off, to trade with distant tribes; and in this way, the Spanish horses pass from hand to hand among the Indians, until they even find their way across the Rocky mountains.

The Mexicans are continually on the alert, to intercept these marauders: but the Indians are apt to outwit them, and force them to make long and wild expeditions in pursuit of their stolen horses.

Two of the Mexican party just mentioned, joined the band of trappers, and proved themselves worthy companions. In the course of their journey through the country frequented by the poor Root Diggers, there seems to have been an emulation between them, which could inflict the greatest outrages upon the natives. The trappers still considered them in the light of dangerous foes ; and the Mexicans, very probably, charged them with the sin of horse-stealing : we have no other mode of accounting for the infamous barbarities of which, according to their own story, they were guilty ; hunting the poor Indians like wild beasts, and killing them without mercy. The Mexicans excelled at this savage sport ; chasing their unfortunate victims at full speed ; noosing them round the neck with their lasos, and then dragging them to death !

Such are the scanty details of this most disgraceful expedition ; at least, such are all that Captain Bonneville had the patience to collect : for he was so deeply grieved by the failure of his plans, and so indignant at the atrocities related to him, that he turned with disgust and horror, from the narrators. Had he exerted a little of the Lynch law of the wilderness, and hanged those dexterous horsemen in their own lasos, it would but have been a well-merited and salutary act of retributive justice.

The failure of this expedition was a blow to Captain Bonneville's pride, and a still greater blow to his purse. The Great Salt Lake still remained unexplored : at the same time, the means which had been furnished so liberally to fit out this favourite expedition, had all been squandered at Monterey ; and the peltries, also, which had been collected on the way. He

would have but scanty returns, therefore, to make this year, to his associates in the United States; and there was great danger of their becoming disheartened, and abandoning the enterprise.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAVELLERS' TALES—INDIAN LURKERS—PROGNOSTICS OF BUCKEYE—
SIGNS AND PORTENTS—THE MEDICINE WOLF—AN ALARM—AN
AMBUSH—THE CAPTURED PROVANT—TRIUMPH—OF BUCKEYE—
ARRIVAL OF SUPPLIES—GRAND CAROUSE—ARRANGEMENTS FOR
THE YEAR—CAPTAIN WYETH AND HIS NEW LEVIED BAND.

THE horror and indignation felt by Captain Bonneville at the excesses of the Californian adventurers, were not participated by his men: on the contrary, the events of that expedition were favoured themes in the camp. The heroes

of Monterey bore the palm in all the gossipings among the hunters. Their glowing descriptions of Spanish bearbaiting and bullfights especially, were listened to with intense delight; and had another expedition to California been proposed, the difficulty would have been, to restrain a general eagerness to volunteer.

The captain had not been long at the rendezvous when he perceived, by various signs, that Indians were lurking in the neighbourhood. It was evident that the Blackfoot band, which he had seen when on his march, had dogged his party, and were intent on mischief. He endeavoured to keep his camp on the alert; but it is as difficult to maintain discipline among trappers at a rendezvous, as among sailors when in port.

Buckeye, the Delaware Indian, was scandalized at this heedlessness of the hunters

when an enemy was at hand, and was continually preaching up caution. He was a little prone to play the prophet, and to deal in signs and portents, which occasionally excited the merriment of his white comrades. He was a great dreamer, and believed in charms and talismans, or medicines; and could foretel the approach of strangers by the howling or barking of the small prairie wolf. This animal, being driven by the larger wolves from the carcasses left on the hunting grounds by the hunters, follows the trail of the fresh meat carried to the camp. Here the smell of the roast and broiled, mingling with every breeze, keeps them hovering about the neighbourhood; scenting every blast, turning up their noses like hungry hounds, and testifying their pinching hunger by long whining howls, and impatient barkings. These are interpreted by the superstitious

Indians into warnings that strangers are at hand; and one accidental coincidence, like the chance fulfilment of an almanac prediction, is sufficient to cover a thousand failures. This little, whining, feast-smelling animal, is, therefore, called among Indians the "medicine wolf;" and such was one of Buckey's infallible oracles.

One morning early, the soothsaying Delaware appeared with a gloomy countenance. His mind was full of gloomy presentiments, whether from mysterious dreams, or the intimations of the medicine wolf, does not appear. "Danger," he said, "was lurking in their path, and there would be some fighting before sunset." He was bantered for his prophecy, which was attributed to his having supped too heartily, and been visited by bad dreams.

In the course of the morning, a party of

hunters set off in pursuit of buffalo, taking with them a mule, to bring home the meat they should procure. They had been some few hours absent, when they came clattering at full speed into camp, giving the war cry of Blackfeet! Blackfeet! Every one seized his weapon, and ran to learn the cause of the alarm.

It appeared that the hunters, as they were returning leisurely, leading their mule, well laden with prime pieces of buffalo meat, passed close by a small stream overhung with trees, about two miles from the camp. Suddenly, a party of Blackfeet, who lay in ambush among the thickets, sprang up with a fearful yell, and discharged a volley at the hunters. The latter immediately threw themselves flat on their horses, put them to their speed, and never paused to look behind, until they found themselves in camp.

Fortunately, they had escaped without a wound; but the mule, with all the "provant," had fallen into the hands of the enemy. This was a loss, as well as an insult, not to be borne. Every man sprung to horse, and with rifle in hand, galloped off to punish the Blackfeet, and rescue the buffalo beef. They came too late; the marauders were off, and all that they found of their mule were the dents of his hoofs, as he had been conveyed off at a round trot, bearing his savory cargo to the hills, to furnish the scampering savages with a banquet of roast meat at the expense of the white men.

The party returned to camp, balked of their revenge, but still more grievously balked of their supper. Buckeye, the Delaware, sat smoking by his fire, perfectly composed. As the hunters related the particulars of the attack, he listened in silence, with unruffled counte-

nance, then pointing to the west, "The sun has not yet set," said he; "Buckeye did not dream like a fool!"

All present now recollected the prediction of the Indian at daybreak, and were struck with what appeared to be its fulfilment. They called to mind, also, a long catalogue of foregone presentiments and predictions made at various times by the Delaware, and, in their superstitious credulity, began to consider him a veritable seer; without thinking how natural it was to predict danger, and how likely to have the prediction verified in the present instance, when various signs gave evidence of a lurking foe.

The various bands of Captain Bonneville's company had now been assembled for some time at the rendezvous; they had had their fill of feasting, and frolicking, and all the species of wild and often uncouth merrimaking, which

invariably take place on these occasions. Their horses, as well as themselves, had recovered from past famine and fatigue, and were again fit for active service ; and an impatience began to manifest itself among the men once more to take the field, and set off on some wandering expedition.

At this juncture, Mr. Cerré arrived at the rendezvous at the head of a supply party, bringing goods and equipments from the states. This active leader, it will be recollected, had embarked the year previously in skin boats on the Bighorn, freighted with the year's collection of peltries. He had met with misfortunes in the course of his voyage : one of his frail barks being upset, and part of the furs lost or damaged.

The arrival of the supplies gave the regular finish to the annual revel. A grand outbreak

of wild debauch ensued among the mountaineers; drinking, dancing, swaggering, gambling, quarrelling and fighting. Alcohol, which, from its portable qualities, containing the greatest quantity of fiery spirit in the smallest compass, is the only liquor carried across the mountains, is the inflammatory beverage at these carousals, and is dealt out to the trappers at four dollars a pint. When inflamed by this fiery beverage, they cut all kinds of mad pranks and gambols, and sometimes burn all their clothes in their drunken bravadoes. A camp, recovering from one of these riotous revels, presents a serio-comic spectacle; black eyes, broken heads, lacklustre visages. Many of the trappers have squandered in one drunken frolic the hard-earned wages of a year; some have run in debt, and must toil on to pay for past pleasure. All are sated with this deep draught

of pleasure, and eager to commence another trapping campaign; for hardship and hard work, spiced with the stimulants of wild adventure, and topped off with an annual frantic carousal, is the lot of the restless trapper.

The captain now made his arrangements for the current year. Cerré and Walker, with a number of men who had been to California, were to proceed to St. Louis with the packages of furs collected during the past year. Another party, headed by a leader named Montero, was to proceed to the Crow country, trap upon its various streams; and among the Black Hills, and thence to proceed to the Arkansas, where he was to go into winter quarters.

The captain marked out for himself a widely different course. He intended to make another expedition, with twenty-three men, to the lower

part of the Columbia river, and to proceed to the valley of the Multnomah ; after wintering in those parts, and establishing a trade with those tribes, among whom he had sojourned on his first visit, he would return in the spring, cross the Rocky mountains, and join Montero and his party in the month of July, at the rendezvous on the Arkansas ; where he expected to receive his annual supplies from the states.

If the reader will cast his eye upon a map, he may form an idea of the contempt for distance which a man acquires in this vast wilderness, by noticing the extent of country comprised in these projected wanderings.

Just as the different parties were about to set out on the 3d of July, on their opposite routes, Captain Bonneville received intelligence that Captain Wyeth, the indefatigable leader of

the salmon-fishing enterprise, who had parted with him about a year previously on the banks of the Bighorn, to descend that wild river in a bull boat, was near at hand, with a new levied band of hunters and trappers, and was on his way once more to the banks of the Columbia.

As we take much interest in the novel enterprise of this "eastern man," and are pleased with his pushing and persevering spirit; and as his movements are characteristic of life in the wilderness, we will, with the reader's permission, while Captain Bonneville is breaking up his camp and saddling his horses, step back a year in time, and a few hundred miles in distance, to the bank of the Bighorn, and launch ourselves with Captain Wyeth in his bull boat: and though his adventurous voyage will take us many hundreds of miles further down wild

and wandering rivers; yet such is the magic power of the pen, that we promise to bring the reader safe back to Bear river valley, by the time the last horse is saddled.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VOYAGE IN A BULL BOAT.

THE BOAT AND ITS CREW—SANDBARS, SNAGS, BEARS, AND BUFFALO
—A CROW CAVALCADE—INDIAN RHETORIC—ARAPOOISH—CROW
CURIOSITIES—TRICKS OF TRADERS—FORT CASS—BLACKFEET—
PRAGMATICAL HUNTERS—THE OLD FLINT GUNS—NIGHT VOYAGE.

It was about the middle of August (1833), that Captain Wyeth, as the reader may recollect, launched his bull boat at the foot of the rapids of the Bighorn, and departed in advance of the parties of Campbell and Captain Bonneville. His boat was made of three

buffalo skins, stretched on a light frame, stitched together, and the seams payed with elk tallow and ashes. It was eighteen feet long, and about five feet six inches wide, sharp at each end, with a round bottom, and drew about a foot and a half of water ; a depth too great for these upper rivers, which abound with shallows and sandbars.

The crew consisted of two half-breeds, who claimed to be white men, though a mixture of the French creole and the Shawnee and Pottawattomie. They claimed, moreover, to be thorough mountaineers, and first-rate hunters—the common boast of these vagabonds of the wilderness.

Besides these, there was a Nez Percé lad of eighteen years of age, a kind of servant of all work, whose great aim, like all Indian servants, was to do as little work as possible ; there was, moreover, a half-breed boy of thirteen, named

Baptiste, son of a Hudson's Bay trader by a Flathead beauty ; who was travelling with Captain Wyeth to see the world and complete his education. Add to these, Mr. Milton Sublette, who went as passenger, and we have the crew of the little bull boat complete.

It certainly was a slight armament with which to run the gauntlet through countries swarming with hostile hordes, and a slight bark to navigate these endless rivers, tossing and pitching down rapids, running on snags and bumping on sandbars ; such, however, are the cockle-shells with which these hardy rovers of the wilderness will attempt the wildest streams ; and it is surprising what rough shocks and thumps these boats will endure, and what vicissitudes they will live through. Their duration, however, is but limited ; they require frequently to be hauled out of the water and dried, to prevent the hides from becoming

water-soaked ; and they eventually rot and go to pieces.

The course of the river was a little to the north of east ; it run about five miles an hour, over a gravelly bottom. The banks were generally alluvial, and thickly grown with cotton-wood trees, intermingled occasionally with ash and plumb trees. Now and then, limestone cliffs and promontories advanced upon the river, making picturesque headlands. Beyond the woody borders rose ranges of naked hills.

Milton Sublette was the Pelorus of this adventurous bark ; being somewhat experienced in this wild kind of navigation. It required all his attention and skill, however, to pilot her clear of sandbars and snags, or sunken trees. There was often, too, a perplexity of choice, where the river branched into various channels, among clusters of islands ; and occasionally the

voyagers found themselves aground, and had to turn back.

It was necessary, also, to keep a wary eye upon the land, for they were passing through the heart of the Crow country, and were continually in reach of any ambush that might be lurking on shore. The most formidable foes that they saw, however, were three grizzly bears, quietly promenading along the bank, who seemed to gaze at them with surprise as they glided by. Herds of buffalo, also, were moving about, or lying on the ground, like cattle in the pasture; excepting such inhabitants as these, a perfect solitude reigned over the land. There was no sign of human habitation; for the Crows, as we have already shown, are a wandering people, a race of hunters and warriors, who live in tents and on horseback, and are continually on the move.

At night they landed, hauled up their boat to dry, pitched their tent, and made a rousing fire. Then, as it was the first evening of their voyage, they indulged in a regale, relishing their buffalo beef with inspiring alcohol. After which, they slept soundly, without dreaming of Crows or Blackfeet. Early in the morning, they again launched their boat, and committed themselves to the stream.

In this way, they voyaged for two days without any material occurrence, excepting a severe thunder storm, which compelled them to put to shore, and wait until it was past.

On the third morning, they descried some persons at a distance, on the river bank. As they were now, by calculation, at no great distance from Fort Cass, a trading post of the American Fur Company, they supposed these might be some of its people. A nearer approach showed them to be Indians. Descrying

a woman apart from the rest, they landed and accosted her. She informed them that the main force of the Crow nation, consisting of five bands, under their several chiefs, were but about two or three miles below, on their way up along the river.

This was unpleasant tidings, but to retreat was impossible, and the river afforded no hiding place. They continued forward, therefore, trusting that, as Fort Cass was so near at hand, the Crows might refrain from any depredations.

Floating down about two miles further, they came in sight of the first band, scattered along the river bank, all well mounted; some armed with guns, others with bows and arrows, and a few with lances. They made a wildly picturesque appearance, managing their horses with their accustomed dexterity and grace. Nothing can be more spirited than a band of

Crow cavaliers. They are a fine race of men, averaging six feet in height, lithe and active, with hawks' eyes and Roman noses. The latter feature is common to the Indians on the east side of the Rocky mountains; those on the western side have generally straight or flat noses.

Captain Wyeth would fain have slipped by this cavalcade unnoticed; but the river, at this place, was not more than ninety yards across; he was perceived, therefore, and hailed by the vagabond warriors, and, we presume, in no very choice language; for, among their other accomplishments, the Crows are famed for possessing a Billingsgate vocabulary of unrivalled opulence, and to be by no means sparing of it whenever an occasion offers. Indeed, though Indians generally are very lofty, rhetorical, and figurative in their language at all great talks, and high ceremonies, yet, if trappers and

traders may be believed, they are the most unsavory vagabonds in their ordinary colloquies; they make no hesitation to call a spade a spade; and when they once undertake to call hard names, the famous pot and kettle, of vituperating memory, are not to be compared with them for scurrility of epithet.

To escape the infliction of any compliments of the kind, or the launching, peradventure, of more dangerous missiles, Captain Wyeth landed with the best grace in his power, and approached the chief of the band. It was Arapooish, the quondam friend of Rose the outlaw, and one whom we have already mentioned as being anxious to promote a friendly intercourse between his tribe and the white men. He was a tall stout man, of good presence, and received the voyagers very graciously. His people, too, thronged around them, and were officiously attentive after the

Crow fashion. One took a great fancy to Baptiste, the Flathead boy, and a still greater fancy to a ring on his finger, which he transposed to his own with surprising dexterity, and then disappeared with a quick step among the crowd.

Another was no less pleased with the Nez Percé lad, and nothing would do but he must exchange knives with him ; drawing a new knife out of the Nez Percé's scabbard, and putting an old one in its place. Another stepped up and replaced this old knife with one still older, and a third helped himself to knife, scabbard, and all. It was with much difficulty that Captain Wyeth and his companions extricated themselves from the clutches of these officious Crows, before they were entirely plucked.

Falling down the river a little further, they came in sight of the second band, and sheered

to the opposite side, with the intention of passing them. The Crows were not to be evaded. Some pointed their guns at the boat, and threatened to fire ; others stripped, plunged into the stream, and came swimming across. Making a virtue of necessity, Captain Wyeth threw a cord to the first that came within reach, as if he wished to be drawn to the shore.

In this way he was overhauled by every band, and by the time he and his people came out of the busy hands of the last, they were eased of most of their superfluities. Nothing, in all probability, but the proximity of the American trading post, kept these land pirates from making a good prize of the bull boat and all its contents.

These bands were in full march, equipped for war, and evidently full of mischief. They were, in fact, the very bands that overrun the

land in the autumn of 1833 ; partly robbed Fitzpatrick of his horses and effects ; hunted and harassed Captain Bonneville and his people : broke up their trapping campaigns, and, in a word, drove them all out of the Crow country.

It has been suspected that they were set on to these pranks by some of the American Fur Company, anxious to defeat the plans of their rivals of the Rocky Mountain Company ; for at this time, their competition was at its height, and the trade of the Crow country was a great object of rivalry. What makes this the more probable, is, that the Crows in their depredations, seemed by no means bloodthirsty, but intent chiefly on robbing the parties of their traps and horses, thereby disabling them from prosecuting their hunting.

We would observe that this year, the Rocky Mountain Company were pushing their way up the rivers, and establishing rival posts near

those of the American Company; and that, at the very time of which we are speaking, Captain Sublette was ascending the Yellowstone with a keel boat, laden with supplies; so that there was every prospect of this eager rivalry being carried to extremities.

The last band of Crow warriors had scarce disappeared in the cloud of dust they had raised, when our voyagers arrived at the mouth of the river, and glided into the current of the Yellowstone. Turning down this stream, they made for Fort Cass, which is situated on the right bank, about three miles below the Big-horn. On the opposite side, they beheld a party of thirty-one savages, which they soon ascertained to be Blackfeet.* The width of the river enabled them to keep at a sufficient dis-

* For an interesting account of this tribe of Indians, and of their enemies, the Flat-heads, see Appendix.

tance, and they soon landed at Fort Cass. This was a mere fortification against Indians; being a stockade of about one hundred and thirty feet square, with two bastions at the extreme corners. M'Tulloch, an agent of the American Company, was stationed there with twenty men: two boats of fifteen tons burden, were lying here: but at certain seasons of the year a steamboat can come up to the fort.

They had scarcely arrived, when the Blackfeet warriors made their appearance on the opposite bank, displaying two American flags in token of amity. They plunged into the river, swam across, and were kindly received at the fort. They were some of the very men who had been engaged, the year previously, in the battle at Pierre's Hole, and a fierce, game-looking set of fellows they were; tall and hawk-nosed, and very much resembling the Crows. They professed to be on an amicable

errand, to make peace with the Crows, and set off in all haste, before night, to overtake them.

Captain Wyeth predicted that they would lose their scalps, for he had heard the Crows denounce vengeance on them, for having murdered two of their warriors who had ventured among them on the faith of a treaty of peace. It is probable, however, that this pacific errand was all a pretence, and that the real object of the Blackfeet braves was to hang about the skirts of the Crow bands, steal their horses, and take the scalps of stragglers.

At Fort Cass, Captain Wyeth disposed of some packages of beaver, and a quantity of buffalo robes. On the following morning (August 18th), he once more launched his bull boat, and proceeded down the Yellowstone, which inclined in an east-northeast direction. The river had alluvial bottoms, fringed with great quantities of the sweet cotton-wood, and

interrupted occasionally by "bluffs" of sandstone. The current occasionally brings down fragments of granite and porphyry.

In the course of the day they saw something moving on the bank among the trees, which they mistook for game of some kind ; and being in want of provisions, pulled towards shore. They discovered, just in time, a party of Blackfeet, lurking in the thickets, and sheered, with all speed, to the opposite side of the river.

After a time, they came in sight of a gang of elk. Captain Wyeth was immediately for pursuing them, rifle in hand, but saw evident signs of dissatisfaction in his half-breed hunters ; who considered him as trenching upon their province, and meddling with things quite above his capacity ; for these veterans of the wilderness are exceedingly pragmatical on points of venery and woodcraft, and tenacious of their

superiority; looking down with infinite contempt upon all raw beginners.

The two worthies, therefore, sallied forth themselves, but after a time, returned empty handed. They laid the blame, however, entirely on their guns; two miserable old pieces with flint locks, which, with all their picking and hammering, were continually apt to miss fire. These great boasters of the wilderness, however, are very often exceeding bad shots, and fortunate it is for them when they have old flint guns to bear the blame.

The next day they passed where a great herd of buffalo were bellowing on a prairie. Again the Castor and Pollux of the wilderness sallied forth, and again their flint guns were at fault, and missed fire, and nothing went off but the buffalo. Captain Wyeth now found there was danger of losing his dinner if he depended upon

his hunters ; he took rifle in hand, therefore, and went forth himself. In the course of an hour he returned laden with buffalo meat, to the great mortification of the two regular hunters, who were annoyed at being eclipsed by a greenhorn.

All hands now set to work to prepare the mid-day repast. A fire was made under an immense cotton-wood tree, that overshadowed a beautiful piece of meadow land ; rich morsels of buffalo hump were soon roasting before it ; in a hearty and prolonged repast, the two unsuccessful hunters gradually recovered from their mortification ; threatened to discard their old flint guns as soon as they should reach the settlements, and boasted more than ever of the wonderful shots they had made, when they had guns that never missed fire.

Having hauled up their boat to dry in the sun, previous to making their repast, the voy-

agers now set in once more afloat, and proceeded on their way. They had constructed a sail out of their old tent, which they hoisted whenever the wind was favourable, and thus skimmed along down the stream.

Their voyage was pleasant, notwithstanding the perils by sea and land, with which they were environed. Whenever they could they encamped on islands, for the greater security. If on the mainland, and in a dangerous neighbourhood, they would shift their camp after dark, leaving their fire burning, dropping down the river to some distance, and making no fire at their second encampment. Sometimes they would float all night with the current; one keeping watch and steering while the rest slept: in such case, they would haul their boat on shore, at noon of the following day, to dry; for notwithstanding every precaution, she was gradually getting water soaked and rotten.

There was something pleasingly solemn and mysterious in thus floating down these wild rivers at night. The purity of the atmosphere in these elevated regions, gave additional splendour to the stars, and heightened the magnificence of the firmament. The occasional rush and laving of the waters; the vague sounds from the surrounding wilderness; the dreary howl or rather whine, of wolves from the plains; the low grunting and bellowing of the buffalo, and the shrill neighing of the elk, struck the ear with an effect unknown in the daytime.

CHAPTER IX.

VOYAGE IN A BULL BOAT, CONTINUED.

BALD EAGLES—THE YELLOWSTONE—MIGRATIONS OF THE BUFFALO—
A NOOSED BUFFALO—A SAVAGE TROPHY—SUBLETTE'S KEEL BOAT
—NAVAL BATTLE WITH A BEAR—A NIGHT CAMP OF INDIANS—A
PERILOUS SITUATION—STORMS AND SNAGS.

The two knowing hunters had scarcely recovered from one mortification, when they were fated to experience another. As the boat was gliding swiftly round a low promontory, thinly covered with trees, one of them gave the alarm of Indians. The boat was instantly

shoved from shore, and every one caught up his rifle. "Where are they?" cried Captain Wyeth.

"There — there! riding on horseback!" cried one of the hunters.

"Yes; with white scarfs on!" cried the other.

Captain Wyeth looked in the direction they pointed, but descried nothing but two bald eagles, perched on a low dry branch, beyond the thickets, and seeming, from the rapid motion of the boat, to be moving swiftly in an opposite direction. The detection of this blunder in the two veterans, who prided themselves on the sureness and quickness of their sight, produced a hearty laugh at their expense, and put an end to their vauntings.

The Yellowstone, above the confluence of the Bighorn, is a clear stream; its waters

were now gradually growing turbid, and assuming the yellow clay colour of the Missouri. The current was about four miles an hour, with occasional rapids; some of them dangerous, but the voyagers passed them all without accident. The banks of the river were in many places precipitous, with strata of bituminous coal.

They now came in a region abounding with buffalo — that ever journeying animal, which moves in countless droves from point to point of the vast wilderness: traversing plains, pouring through the intricate defiles of mountains, swimming rivers—ever on the move; guided on its boundless migrations by some traditionary knowledge, like the finny tribes of the ocean, which, at their certain seasons, find their mysterious paths across the deep, and revisit the remotest shores.

These great migratory herds of buffalo have

their hereditary paths and highways, worn deep through the country, and making for the surest passes of the mountains, and the most practicable fords of the rivers. When once a great column is in full career, it goes straight forward, regardless of all obstacles; those in front being impelled by the moving mass behind. At such times, they will break through a camp, trampling down every thing in their course.

It was the lot of the voyagers, one night, to encamp at one of these buffalo landing places, and exactly on the trail. They had not been long asleep, when they were awakened by a great bellowing, and tramping, and the rush, and splash, and snorting of animals in the river. They had just time to ascertain that a buffalo army was entering the river on the opposite side, and making towards the landing place. With all haste they

moved their boat and shifted their camp, by which time, the head of the column had reached the shore, and came pressing up the bank.

It was a singular spectacle, by the uncertain moonlight, to behold this countless throng making their way across the river, blowing, and bellowing, and splashing. Sometimes they pass in such dense and continuous column as to form a temporary dam across the river: the waters of which rise, and rush over their backs, or between their squadrons. The roaring and rushing sounds of one of these vast herds crossing a river, may sometimes, in a still night, be heard for miles.

The voyagers had now game in plenty and profusion. They could kill as many buffalo as they pleased, and, occasionally, were wanton in their havoc: especially among scattered

herds, that came swimming near the boat. On one occasion, an old buffalo bull approached so near, that the half-breeds must fain try to noose him, as they would a wild horse. The noose was successfully thrown around his head, and secured him by the horns, and they now promised themselves ample sport. The buffalo made a prodigious turmoil in the water, bellowing, and blowing, and floundering; and they all floated down the stream together. At length he found foothold on a sandbar, and taking to his heels, whirled the boat after him, like a whale when harpooned; so that the hunters were obliged to cast off their rope, with which strange headgear the venerable bull made off to the prairies.

On the 24th of August, the bull boat emerged, with its adventurous crew, into the broad bosom of the mighty Missouri. Here,

about six miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone, the voyagers landed at Fort Union, the distributing post of the American Fur Company in the western country. It was a stockaded fortress, about two hundred and twenty feet square, pleasantly situated on a high bank.

Here they were hospitably entertained by Mr. M'Kenzie, the superintendent, and remained with him three days, enjoying the unusual luxuries of bread, butter, milk, and cheese, for the fort was well supplied with domestic cattle, though it had no garden. The atmosphere of these elevated regions is said to be too dry for the culture of vegetables; yet the voyagers, in coming down the Yellowstone, had met with plums, grapes, cherries, and currants, and had observed ash and elm trees. Where these grow, the climate cannot be incompatible with gardening.

At Fort Union, Captain Wyeth met with a melancholy memento of one of his men. This was a powderflask, which a clerk had purchased from a Blackfoot warrior. It bore the initials of poor More, the unfortunate youth murdered the year previously, at Jackson's Hole, by the Blackfeet, and whose bones had been subsequently found by Captain Bonneville. This flask had either been passed from hand to hand of the tribe, or, perhaps, had been brought to the fort by the very savage who slew him.

As the bull boat was now nearly worn out, and altogether unfit for the broader and more turbulent stream of the Missouri, it was given up, and a canoe of cotton-wood, about twenty feet long, fabricated by the Blackfeet, was purchased to supply its place. In this, Captain Wyeth hoisted his sail, and bidding adieu to the hospitable superintendent of Fort Union,

turned his prow to the east, and set off down the Missouri.

He had not proceeded many hours, before, in the evening, he came to a large keel boat, at anchor. It proved to be the boat of Captain William Sublette, freighted with munitions for carrying on a powerful opposition to the American Fur Company. The voyagers went on board, where they were treated with the hearty hospitality of the wilderness, and passed a social evening talking over past scenes and adventures, and especially the memorable fight at Pierre's Hole.

Here, Milton Sublette determined to give up further voyaging in the canoe, and remain with his brother; accordingly, in the morning, the fellow voyagers took kind leave of each other, and the captain continued on his course. There was now no one on board of his boat that had ever voyaged on the Missouri; it was,

however, all plain sailing down the stream, without any chance of missing the way.

All day the voyagers pulled gently along, and landed in the evening and supped; then re-embarking, they suffered the canoe to float down with the current; taking turns to watch and sleep.

The night was calm and serene; the elk kept up a continual whinnying or squealing, being the commencement of the season when they are in heat. In the midst of the night, the canoe struck on a sandbar, and all hands were aroused by the rush and roar of the wild waters, which broke around her. They were all obliged to jump overboard, and work hard to get her off, which was accomplished with much difficulty.

In the course of the following day, they saw three grizzly bears at different times along the bank. The last one was on a point of land,

and was evidently making for the river, to swim across. The two half-breed hunters were now eager to repeat the manœuvre of the noose; promising to entrap bruin, and have rare sport in strangling and drowning him. Their only fear was, that he might take fright and return to land before they could get between him and the shore.

Holding back, therefore, until he was fairly committed in the centre of the stream, they then pulled forward with might and main, so as to cut off his retreat, and take him in the rear. One of the worthies stationed himself in the bow, with the cord and slip-noose, the other, with the Nez Percé, managed the paddles.

There was nothing further from the thoughts of honest bruin, however, than to beat a retreat. Just as the canoe was drawing near, he turned suddenly round and made for it, with

a horrible snarl, and a tremendous show of teeth. The affrighted hunter called to his comrades to paddle off.

Scarcely had they turned the boat, when the bear laid his enormous claws on the gunwale, and attempted to get on board. The canoe was nearly overturned, and a deluge of water came pouring over the gunwale. All was clamour, terror, and confusion. Every one bawled out—the bear roared and snarled—one caught up a gun; but water had rendered it useless. Others handled their paddles more effectually, and beating old bruin about the head and claws, obliged him to relinquish his hold.

They now plied their paddles with might and main, the bear made the best of his way to shore, and so ended the second exploit of the noose; the hunters determining to have no more naval contests with grizzly bears.

The voyagers were now out of the range of Crows and Blackfeet; but they were approaching the country of the Rees, or Arickaras; a tribe no less dangerous: and who were, generally, hostile to small parties.

In passing through their country, Captain Wyeth laid by all day, and drifted quietly down the river at night. In this way, he passed on, until he supposed himself safely through the region of danger; when he resumed his voyaging in the open day.

On the 3d of September, he had landed, at mid-day, to dine; and while some were making a fire, one of the hunters mounted a high bank, to look out for game. He had scarce glanced his eye round, when he perceived horses grazing on the opposite side of the river. Crouching down, he slunk back to the camp, and reported what he had seen. On further reconnoitring, the voyagers counted

twenty-one lodges; and, from the number of horses, computed that there must be nearly a hundred Indians encamped there,

They now drew their boat, with all speed and caution, into a thicket of water willows, and remained closely concealed all day. As soon as the night closed in, they re-embarked. The moon would rise early; so that they had but about two hours of darkness, to get past the camp. The night, however, was cloudy, with a blustering wind.

Silently, and with muffled oars, they glided down the river, keeping close under the shore opposite to the camp; watching its various lodges and fires, and the dark forms passing to and fro between them. Suddenly, on turning a point of land, they found themselves close upon a camp on their own side of the river. It appeared that not more than one

half of the band had crossed. They were within a few yards of the shore: they saw distinctly the savages—some standing, some lying round the fire. Horses were grazing around. Some lodges were set up, others had been sent across the river.

The red glare of the fires upon these wild groups and harsh faces, contrasted with the surrounding darkness, had a startling effect, as the voyagers suddenly came upon the scene. The dogs of the camp perceived them, and barked; but the Indians, fortunately, took no heed of their clamour. Captain Wyeth instantly sheered his boat out into the stream; when, unluckily, it struck upon a sandbar, and stuck fast. It was a perilous and trying situation; for he was fixed between the two camps, and within rifle range of both. All hands jumped out into the water, and tried to get

the boat off; but as no one dared to give the word, they could not pull together, and their labour was in vain.

In this way, they laboured for a long time; until Captain Wyeth thought of giving a signal for a general heave, by lifting his hat. The expedient succeeded. They launched their canoe again into deep water, and getting in, had the delight of seeing the camp fires of the savages soon fading in the distance.

They continued under way the greater part of the night; until far beyond all danger from this band: when they pulled to shore, and encamped.

The following day was windy; and they came near upsetting their boat, in carrying sail. Towards evening the wind subsided, and a beautiful calm night succeeded. They floated along with the current throughout the night, taking turns to watch and steer. The deep

stillness of the night was occasionally interrupted by the neighing of the elk; the hoarse lowing of the buffalo; the hooting of large owls, and the screeching of the small ones; now and then the splash of a beaver, or the gong-like sound of the swan.

Part of their voyage was extremely tempestuous; with high winds, tremendous thunder, and soaking rain; and they were repeatedly in extreme danger from drift wood and sunken trees.

On one occasion, having continued to float at night, after the moon was down, they run under a great snag, or sunken tree, with dry branches above the water. These caught the mast, while the boat swung round broadside to the stream, and began to fill with water. Nothing saved her from total wreck, but cutting away the mast. She then drove down the stream; but left one of the unlucky half-breeds

clinging to the snag, like a monkey to a pole. It was necessary to run in shore, toil up, laboriously, along the eddies, and attain some distance above the snag, when they launched forth again into the stream, and floated down with it to his rescue.

We forbear to detail all the circumstances and adventures of upwards of a month's voyage, down the windings and doublings of this vast river; in the course of which, they stopped, occasionally, at a post of one of the rival fur companies, or at a government agency for an Indian tribe. Neither shall we dwell upon the changes of climate and productions, as the voyagers swept down from north to south, across several degrees of latitude; arriving at the regions of oaks and sycamores; of mulberry and basswood trees; of paroquets and wild turkeys. This is one of the characteristics of the middle and lower part of the Missouri:

but still more so of the Mississippi; whose rapid current traverses a succession of latitudes, so as in a few days to float the voyager almost from the frozen regions to the tropics.

The voyage of Captain Wyeth shows the regular and unobstructed flow of the rivers, on the east side of the rocky mountains, in contrast to those of the western side; where rocks and rapids continually menace and obstruct the voyager. We find him in a frail bark of skins, launching himself in a stream at the foot of the Rocky mountains, and floating down from river to river, as they empty themselves into each other: and so he might have kept on, upwards of two thousand miles, until his little bark should drift into the ocean.

At present, we shall stop with him at Cantonment Leavenworth, the frontier post of the

United States; where he arrived on the 27th of September.

Here, his first care was to have his Nez Percé Indian, and his half-breed boy, Baptiste, vaccinated. As they approached the fort, they were hailed by the sentinel. The sight of a soldier in full array, with what appeared to be a long knife glittering on the end of his musket, struck Baptiste with such affright, that he took to his heels, bawling for mercy at the top of his voice. The Nez Percé would have followed him had not Captain Wyeth assured him of his safety.

When they underwent the operation of the lancet, the doctor's wife and another lady were present: both beautiful women. They were the first white women that they had seen, and they could not keep their eyes off them. On turning to the boat, they recounted to their

companions all that they had observed at the fort; but were especially eloquent about the white squaws, who, they said, were white as snow, and more beautiful than any human being they had ever beheld.

We shall not accompany the captain any further in his voyage; but will simply state, that he made his way to Boston, where he succeeded in organizing an association under the name of "The Columbia River Fishing and Trading Company," for his original objects of a salmon fishery and a trade in furs. A brig, the *May Dacres*, had been despatched for the Columbia, with supplies: and he was now on his way to the same point, at the head of sixty men, whom he had enlisted at St. Louis; some of whom were experienced hunters, and all more habituated to the life of the wilderness than his first band of "down-easters."

We will now return to Captain Bonneville and his party, whom we left making up their packs and saddling their horses, in Bear river valley.

CHAPTER X.

DEPARTURE OF CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE FOR THE COLUMBIA—ADVANCE OF CAPTAIN WYETH—EFFORTS TO KEEP THE LEAD—HUDSON'S BAY PARTY—A JUNKETING—A DELECTABLE BEVERAGE—HONEY AND ALCOHOL—HIGH CAROUSING—THE CANADIAN BON VIVANT—A CACHE—A RAPID MOVE—CAPTAIN WYETH AND HIS PLANS—HIS TRAVELLING COMPANIONS—BUFFALO HUNTING—MORE CONVIVIALITY—AN INTERRUPTION.

It was the 3d of July, that Captain Bonneville set out on his second visit to the banks of the Columbia, at the head of twenty-three men. He travelled leisurely, to keep his horses fresh, until the 10th of July, a scout brought

word that Captain Wyeth, with his band, was but fifty miles in the rear, and pushing forward with all speed.

This caused some bustle in the camp ; for it was important to get first to the buffalo ground, to secure provisions for the journey. As the horses were too heavily laden to travel fast, a cache was digged, as promptly as possible, to receive all superfluous baggage. Just as it was finished, a spring burst out of the earth at the bottom. Another cache was therefore digged, about two miles further on ; when, as they were about to bury the effects, a line of horsemen, with packhorses, were seen streaking over the plain, and encamped close by.

It proved to be a small band in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, under the command of a veteran Canadian ; one of those petty leaders, who, with a small party of men, and a small supply of goods, are employed to

follow up a band of Indians from one hunting ground to another, and buy up their peltries.

Having received numerous civilities from the Hudson's Bay Company, the captain sent an invitation to the officers of the party to an evening regale; and set to work to make jovial preparations.

As the night air in these elevated regions is apt to be cold, a blazing fire was soon made, that would have done credit to a Christmas dinner, instead of a midsummer banquet. The parties met in high good-fellowship. There was abundance of such hunter's fare as the neighbourhood furnished; and it was all discussed with mountain appetites. They talked over all the events of their late campaigns: but the Canadian veteran had been unlucky in some of his transactions; and his brow began to grow cloudy. Captain Bonneville remarked

his rising spleen, and regretted that he had no juice of the grape, to keep it down.

A man's wit, however, is quick and inventive in the wilderness : a thought suggested itself to the captain, how he might brew a delectable beverage. Among his stores, was a keg of honey but half exhausted. This he filled up with alcohol, and stirred the fiery and mellifluous ingredients together. The glorious results may readily be imagined : a happy compound, of strength and sweetness, enough to sooth the most ruffled temper, and unsettle the most solid understanding.

The beverage worked to a charm. The can circulated merrily : the first deep draught washed out every care from the mind of the veteran ; the second, elevated his spirit to the clouds. He was, in fact, a boon companion ; as all veteran Canadian traders are apt to be.

He now became glorious ; talked over all his exploits, his huntings, his fightings with Indian braves, his loves with Indian beauties ; sang snatches of old French ditties, and Canadian boat songs ; drank deeper and deeper, sang louder and louder ; until, having reached a climax of drunken gaiety, he gradually declined, and at length, fell fast asleep upon the ground. After a long nap, he again raised his head, imbibed another potation of the “ sweet and strong,” flashed up with another slight blaze of French gaiety, and again fell asleep.

The morning found him still upon the field of action, but in sad and sorrowful condition ; suffering the penalties of past pleasures, and calling to mind the captain’s dulcet compound, with many a retch and spasm. It seemed as if the honey and alcohol, which had passed so glibly and smoothly over his tongue, were at war within his stomach ; and that he had a

swarm of bees within his head. In short, so helpless and woe-begone was his plight, that his party proceeded on their march without him: the captain promising to bring him on in safety, in the after part of the day.

As soon as this party had moved off, Captain Bonneville's men proceeded to construct and fill their cache; and just as it was completed, the party of Captain Wyeth was descried at a distance. In a moment, all was activity to take the road. The horses were prepared and mounted: and being lightened of a great part of their burdens, were able to move with celerity. As to the worthy convive of the preceding evening, he was carefully gathered up from the hunter's couch on which he lay, repentant and supine, and, being packed upon one of the horses, was hurried forward with the convoy, groaning and ejaculating at every jolt.

In the course of the day, Captain Wyeth, being lightly mounted, rode ahead of his party, and overtook Captain Bonneville. Their meeting was friendly and courteous: and they discussed, sociably, their respective fortunes since they separated on the banks of the Big-horn. Captain Wyeth announced his intention of establishing a small trading post at the mouth of the Portneuf, and to leave a few men there with a quantity of goods, to trade with the neighbouring Indians. He was compelled, in fact, to this measure, in consequence of the refusal of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company to take a supply of goods, which he had brought out for them according to contract; and which he had no other mode of disposing of. He further informed Captain Bonneville, that the competition between the Rocky Mountain and American Fur Companies, which had led to such nefarious stratagems, and deadly feuds,

was at an end ; they having divided the country between them ; allotting boundaries, within which each was to trade and hunt, so as not to interfere with the other.

In company with Captain Wyeth, were travelling two men of science ; Mr. Nuttall, the botanist ; the same who ascended the Missouri, at the time of the expedition to Astoria ; and Mr. Townshend, an ornithologist : from these gentlemen, we may look forward to important information concerning these interesting regions. There were three religious missionaries, also, bound to the shores of the Columbia, to spread the light of the gospel in that far wilderness.

After riding for some time together, in friendly conversation, Captain Wyeth returned to his party, and Captain Bonneville continued to press forward, and to gain ground. At night, he sent off the sadly sober, and moralizing

chief of the Hudson's Bay Company, under a proper escort, to rejoin his people ; his route branching off in a different direction. The latter took a cordial leave of his host, hoping, on some future occasion to repay his hospitality in kind.

In the morning, the captain was early on the march ; throwing scouts out far ahead, to scour hill and dale in search of buffalo. He had confidently expected to find game, in abundance, on the head waters of the Portneuf : but on reaching that region, not a track was to be seen.

At length, one of the scouts, who had made a wide sweep away to the head waters of the Blackfoot river, discovered great herds quietly grazing in the adjacent meadows. He sat out on his return, to report his discoveries ; but night overtaking him, he was kindly, and hospitably entertained at the camp of Captain

Wyeth. As soon as day dawned, he hastened to his own camp with the welcome intelligence ; and about ten o'clock of the same morning Captain Bonneville's party were in the midst of the game.

The packs were scarcely off the backs of the mules, when the "runners," mounted on the fleetest horses, were full tilt after the buffalo. Others of the men were busied erecting scaffolds, and other contrivances, for jerking or drying meat ; others were lighting great fires for the same purpose : soon, the hunters began to make their appearance, bringing in the choicest morsels of buffalo meat : these were placed upon the scaffolds, and the whole camp presented a scene of singular hurry and activity.

At daylight the next morning, the runners again took the field, with similar success : and, after an interval of repose, made their third

and last chase, about twelve o'clock; for by this time, Captain Wyeth's party was in sight.

The game being now driven into a valley, at some distance, Captain Wyeth was obliged to fix his camp there: but he came in the evening to pay Captain Bonneville a visit. He was accompanied by Captain Stewart, the amateur traveller; who had not yet sated his appetite for the adventurous life of the wilderness. With him, also, was a Mr. M'Kay, a half-breed; son of the unfortunate adventurer of the same name, who came out in the first maritime expedition to Astoria, and was blown up in the Tonquin. His son had grown up in the employ of the British fur companies; and was a prime hunter, and a daring partisan. He held, moreover, a farm, in the valley of the Wallamut.

The three visitors, when they reached Captain Bonneville's camp, were surprised to find

no one in it but himself and three men; his party being dispersed in all directions, to make the most of their present chance for hunting. They remonstrated with him on the imprudence of remaining with so trifling a guard, in a region so full of danger. Captain Bonneville vindicated the policy of his conduct. He never hesitated to send out all his hunters, when any important object was to be attained: and experience taught him he was most secure, when his forces were thus distributed over the surrounding country. He then was sure that no enemy could approach, from any direction, without being discovered by his hunters; who have a quick eye for detecting the slightest signs of the proximity of Indians: and who would instantly convey intelligence to the camp.

The captain now set to work with his men, to prepare a suitable entertainment for his

guests. It was a time of plenty in the camp; of prime hunters' dainties; of buffalo humps, and buffalo tongues; and roasted ribs, and broiled marrowbones: all these were cooked in hunters' style; served up with a profusion known only on a plentiful hunting ground, and discussed with an appetite that would astonish the puny gourmands of the cities. But above all, and to give a bacchanalian grace to this truly masculine repast, the captain produced his mellifluous keg of home-brewed nectar, which had been so potent over the senses of the veteran of Hudson's Bay. Potations, pottle deep, again went round; never did beverage excite greater glee, or meet with more rapturous commendation.

The parties were fast advancing to that happy state, which would have ensured ample cause for the next day's repentance; and the bees were already beginning to buzz about their

ears, when a messenger came spurring to the camp with intelligence, that Captain Wyeth's people had got entangled in one of those deep and frightful ravines, piled with immense fragments of volcanic rock, which gash the whole country about the head waters of the Blackfoot river.

The revel was instantly at an end: the keg of sweet and potent home-brewed was deserted; and the guests departed with all speed, to aid in extricating their companions from the volcanic ravine.

CHAPTER XI.

RAPID MARCH—A CLOUD OF DUST—WILD HORSEMEN—"HIGH JINKS"—HORSERACING AND RIFLE SHOOTING—THE GAME OF HAND—THE FISHING SEASON—MODE OF FISHING—TABLE LANDS—SALMON FISHERS—THE CAPTAIN'S VISIT TO AN INDIAN LODGE—THE INDIAN GIRL—THE POCKET MIRROR—SUPPER—TROUBLES OF AN EVIL CONSCIENCE.

"UP and away!" is the first thought at daylight of the Indian trader, when a rival is at hand and distance is to be gained. Early in the morning, Captain Bonneville ordered the half-dried meat to be packed upon the horses, and leaving Captain Wyeth and his party to hunt the scattered buffalo, he pushed off rapidly to

the east, to regain the plain of the Portneuf. His march was rugged and dangerous ; through volcanic hills, broken into cliffs and precipices ; and seamed with tremendous chasms, where the rocks rose like walls.

On the second day, however, he encamped once more in the plain, and as it was still early, some of the men strolled out to the neighbouring hills. In casting their eyes round the country, they perceived a great cloud of dust rising in the south, and evidently approaching. Hastening back to the camp, they gave the alarm. Preparations were instantly made to receive an enemy ; while some of the men, throwing themselves upon the “running horses” kept for hunting, galloped off to reconnoitre. In a little while, they made signals from a distance that all was friendly.

By this time, the cloud of dust had swept on as if hurried along by a blast, and a band

of wild horsemen came dashing on at full leap into the camp, yelling and whooping like so many maniacs. Their dresses, and accoutrements, their mode of riding, and their uncouth clamour, made them seem a party of savages arrayed for war: but they proved to be principally half-breeds, and white men grown savage in the wilderness, who were employed as trappers and hunters in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Here was again "high jinks" in the camp. Captain Bonneville's men hailed these wild scamperers as congenial spirits, or rather, as the very game birds of their class. They entertained them with the hospitality of mountaineers, feasting them at every fire. At first, there were mutual details of adventures and exploits, and broad joking mingled with peals of laughter. Then came on boasting of the comparative merits of horses and rifles, which

soon engrossed every tongue. This naturally led to racing, and shooting at a mark: one trial of speed and skill succeeded another; shouts and acclamations rose from the victorious parties, fierce altercations succeeded, and a general *melée* was about to take place, when suddenly the attention of the quarrellers was arrested by a strange kind of Indian chant or chorus that seemed to operate upon them as a charm. Their fury was at an end; a tacit reconciliation succeeded, and the ideas of the whole mongrel crowd; whites, half-breeds, and squaws; were turned in a new direction. They all formed into groups, and taking their places at the several fires, prepared for one of the most exciting amusements of the Nez Percés, and the other tribes of the far west.

The choral chant, in fact, which had thus acted as a charm, was a kind of wild accompa-

niment to the favourite Indian game of "Hand." This is played by two parties drawn out in opposite platoons before a blazing fire. It is in some respects like the old game of passing the ring or the button, and detecting the hand which holds it. In the present game, the object hidden, or the *cache* as it is called by the trappers, is a small splint of wood, or other diminutive article, that may be concealed in the closed hand. This is passed backwards and forwards among the party "in hand," while the party "out of hand" guess where it is concealed. To heighten the excitement and confuse the guessers, a number of dry poles are laid before each platoon, upon which the members of the party "in hand" beat furiously with short staves, keeping time to the choral chant already mentioned, which waxes fast and furious as the game proceeds.

As large bets are staked upon the game, the excitement is prodigious. Each party in turn bursts out in full chorus, beating, and yelling, and working themselves up into such a heat, that the perspiration rolls down their naked shoulders, even in the cold of a winter night. The bets are doubled and trebled as the game advances, the mental excitement increases almost to madness, and all the worldly effects of the gamblers are often hazarded upon the position of a straw.

These gambling games were kept up throughout the night; every fire glared upon a group that looked like a crew of maniacs at their frantic orgies; and the scene would have been kept up throughout the succeeding day, had not Captain Bonneville interposed his authority, and, at the usual hour, issued his marching orders.

Proceeding down the course of Snake river,

the hunters regularly returned to camp in the evening laden with wild geese, which were yet scarcely able to fly and were easily caught in great numbers.

It was now the season of the annual fish feast, with which the Indians in these parts celebrate the first appearance of salmon in this river. These fish are taken in great numbers at the numerous falls of about four feet pitch. The Indians flank the shallow water just below, and spear them as they attempt to pass. In wide parts of the river, also, they place a sort of chevaux-de-frise, or fence, of poles interwoven with withes, and forming an angle in the middle of the current, where a small opening is left for the salmon to pass. Around this opening the Indians station themselves on small rafts, and ply their spears with great success.

The table lands so common in this region

have a sandy soil, inconsiderable in depth, and covered with sage, or, more properly speaking, wormwood. Below this, is a level stratum of rock, riven occasionally by frightful chasms. The whole plain rises as it approaches the river, and terminates with high and broken cliffs; difficult to pass, and in many places so precipitous, that it is impossible, for days together, to get down to the water's edge, to give drink to the horses. This obliges the traveller occasionally to abandon the vicinity of the river, and make a wide sweep into the interior.

It was now far in the month of July, and the party suffered extremely from sultry weather and dusty travelling. The flies and gnats, too, were extremely troublesome to the horses; especially when keeping along the edge of the river where it runs between low sand banks. Whenever the travellers encamped in the after-

noon, the horses retired to the gravelly shores and remained there, without attempting to feed until the cool of the evening. As to the travellers, they plunged into the clear and cool current, to wash away the dust of the road, and refresh themselves after the heat of the day. The nights were always cool and pleasant.

At one place where they encamped for some time, the river was nearly five hundred yards wide, and studded with grassy islands, adorned with groves of willow and cotton-wood. Here the Indians were assembled in great numbers, and had barricaded the channels between the islands to enable them to spear the salmon with greater facility. They were a timid race, and seemed unaccustomed to the sight of white men.

Entering one of the huts, Captain Bonneville found the inhabitants just proceeding to

cook a fine salmon. It is put into a pot filled with cold water, and hung over the fire. The moment the water begins to boil, the fish is considered cooked.

Taking his seat unceremoniously, and lighting his pipe, the captain awaited the cooking of the fish, intending to invite himself to the repast. The owner of the hut seemed to take his intrusion in good part.

While conversing with him, the captain felt something move behind him, and turning round and removing a few skins and old buffalo robes, discovered a young girl, about fourteen years of age, crouched beneath, who directed her large black eyes full in his face, and continued to gaze in mute surprise and terror. The captain endeavoured to dispel her fears, and drawing a bright riband from his pocket, attempted repeatedly to tie it round her neck. She jerked back at each attempt, uttering a sound very

much like a snarl; nor could all the blandishments of the captain, albeit, a pleasant, good looking, and somewhat gallant man, succeed in conquering the shyness of the savage little beauty.

His attentions were now turned to the parents, whom he presented with an awl and a little tobacco, and having thus secured their good-will, continued to smoke his pipe and watch the salmon. While thus seated near the threshold, an urchin of the family approached the door, but catching a sight of the strange guest, ran off screaming with terror, and ensconced himself behind the long straw at the back of the hut.

Desirous to dispel entirely this timidity, and to open a trade with the simple inhabitants of the hut, who, he did not doubt, had furs somewhere concealed; the captain now drew forth

that grand lure in the eyes of the savage, a pocket mirror. The sight of it was irresistible. After examining it for a long time with wonder and admiration, they produced a muskrat skin, and offered it in exchange. The captain shook his head ; but purchased the skin for a couple of buttons—superfluous trinkets ! as the worthy lord of the hovel had neither coat nor breeches on which to place them.

The mirror still continued the great object of desire, particularly in the eyes of the old housewife, who produced a pot of parched flour and a string of biscuit roots. These procured her some trifle in return ; but could not command the purchase of the mirror.

The salmon being now completely cooked, they all joined heartily in supper. A bounteous portion was deposited before the captain by the old woman, upon some fresh grass,

which served instead of a platter ; and never had he tasted a salmon boiled so completely to his fancy.

Supper being over, the captain lighted his pipe and passed it to his host, who, inhaling the smoke, puffed it through his nostrils so assiduously, that in a little while his head manifested signs of confusion and dizziness. Being satisfied, by this time, of the kindly and companionable qualities of the captain, he became easy and communicative ; and at length, hinted something about exchanging beaver skins for horses. The captain at once offered to dispose of his steed, which stood fastened at the door. The bargain was soon concluded, whereupon the Indian, removing a pile of bushes under which his valuables were concealed, drew forth the number of skins agreed upon as the price.

Shortly afterwards, some of the captain's

people coming up, he caused another horse to be saddled, and mounting it took his departure from the hut, after distributing a few trifling presents among its simple inhabitants.

During all the time of his visit, the little Indian girl had kept her large black eyes fixed upon him, almost without winking, watching every movement with awe and wonder; and as he rode off, remained gazing after him, motionless as a statue. Her father, however, delighted with his new acquaintance, mounted his newly purchased horse, and followed in the train of the captain, to whom he continued to be a faithful and useful adherent during his sojourn in the neighbourhood.

The cowardly effects of an evil conscience was evidenced in the conduct of one of the captain's men, who had been in the Californian expedition. During all their intercourse with the harmless people of this place, he had mani-

fested uneasiness and anxiety. While his companions mingled freely and joyously with the natives, he went about with a restless, suspicious, look ; scrutinizing every painted form and face, and starting often at the sudden approach of some meek and inoffensive savage, who regarded him with reverence as a superior being. Yet this was ordinarily a bold fellow, who never flinched from danger, nor turned pale at the prospect of a battle.

At length, he requested permission of Captain Bonneville to keep out of the way of these people entirely. Their striking resemblance, he said, to the people of Ogden's river, made him continually fear that some among them might have seen him in that expedition ; and might seek an opportunity of revenge. Ever after this, while they remained in this neighbourhood, he would skulk out of the way and

keep aloof, when any of the native inhabitants approached.

“Such,” observes Captain Bonneville, “is the effect of self-reproach, even upon the roving trapper in the wilderness, who has little else to fear than the stings of his own guilty conscience.”

CHAPTER XII.

OUTFIT OF A TRAPPER—RISKS TO WHICH HE IS SUBJECTED—PARTNERSHIP OF TRAPPERS—ENMITY OF INDIANS—DISTANT SMOKE—A COUNTRY ON FIRE—GUN CREEK—GRAND ROND—FINE PASTURES—PERPLEXITIES IN A SMOKY COUNTRY—CONFLAGRATION OF FORESTS.

IT had been the intention of Captain Bonneville, in descending along Snake river, to scatter his trappers upon the smaller streams. In this way, a range of country is "trapped," by small detachments from a main body. The outfit of a trapper is generally a rifle, a pound of powder,

and four pounds of lead, with a bullet mould, seven traps, an axe, a hatchet, a knife and awl, a camp kettle, two blankets, and, where supplies are plenty, seven pounds of flour. He has, generally, two or three horses, to carry himself, and his baggage and peltries. Two trappers commonly go together, for the purposes of mutual assistance and support; a larger party could not easily escape the eyes of the Indians.

Trapping is a service of peril, and even more so at present than formerly; for the Indians since they have got into the habit of trafficking peltries with the traders, have learnt the value of the beaver, and look upon the trappers as poachers, who are filching the riches from their streams, and interfering with their market. They make no hesitation, therefore, in murdering the solitary trapper, and thus destroying a competitor, while they possess themselves of

his spoils. It is with regret we add, too, that this hostility has in many cases been instigated by traders, desirous of injuring their rivals, but who have themselves often reaped the fruits of the mischief they have sown.

When two trappers undertake any considerable stream, their mode of proceeding is, to hide their horses in some lonely glen, where they can graze unobserved. They then build a small hut, dig out a canoe from a cottonwood tree, and in this, poke along shore silently, in the evening, and set their traps. These they revisit in the same silent way at daybreak. When they take any beaver, they bring it home, skin it, stretch the skin on sticks to dry, and feast upon the flesh. The body, hung up before the fire, turns by its own weight, and is roasted in a superior style; the tail is the trapper's titbit; it is cut off, put on the end of a stick, and toasted, and is con-

sidered even a greater dainty than the tongue or the marrowbone of a buffalo.

With all their silence and caution, however, the poor trappers cannot always escape their hawk-eyed enemies. Their trail has been discovered, perhaps, and followed up for many a mile; or their smoke has been seen curling up out of the secret glen, or has been scented by the savages, whose sense of smell is almost as acute as that of sight. Sometimes they are pounced upon when in the act of setting their traps; at other times, they are roused from their sleep by the horrid war whoop; or, perhaps, have a bullet or an arrow whistling about their ears, in the midst of one of their beaver banquets. In this way they are picked off, from time to time, and nothing is known of them, until, per chance, their bones are found bleaching in some lonely ravine, or on the banks of some nameless stream, which from

that time is called after them. Many of the small streams beyond the mountains thus perpetuate the names of unfortunate trappers that have been murdered on their banks.

A knowledge of these dangers deterred Captain Bonneville, in the present instance, from detaching small parties of trappers as he had intended; for his scouts brought him word, that formidable bands of the Banneck Indians were lying on the Boisé and Payette rivers, at no great distance, so that they would be apt to detect and cut off any stragglers. It behoved him also, to keep his party together, to guard against any predatory attack upon the main body; he continued on his way, therefore, without dividing his forces.

And fortunate it was that he did so; for in a little while, he encountered one of the phenomena of the western wilds, that would effectually have prevented his scattered people

from finding each other again. In a word it was the season of setting fire to the priaries. As he advanced, he began to perceive great clouds of smoke at a distance, rising by degrees, and spreading over the whole face of the country. The atmosphere became dry and surcharged with murky vapour, parching to the skin, and irritating to the eyes. When travelling among the hills, they could scarcely discern objects at the distance of a few paces; indeed, the least exertion of the vision was painful. There was evidently some vast conflagration in the direction toward which they were proceeding; it was as yet at a great distance, and during the day, they could only see the smoke rising in larger and denser volumes, and rolling forth in an immense canopy. At night, the skies were all glowing with the reflection of unseen fires; hanging in an immense body of lurid light, high above the horizon.

Having reached Gun Creek, an important stream coming from the left, Captain Bonneville turned up its course, to traverse the mountains and avoid the great bend of Snake river. Being now out of the range of the Bannecks, he sent out his people in all directions to hunt the antelope for present supplies; keeping the dried meats for places where game might be scarce.

During four days that the party were ascending Gun creek, the smoke continued to increase so rapidly, that it was impossible to distinguish the face of the country and ascertain landmarks. Fortunately, the travellers fell upon an Indian trail, which led them to the head waters of the Fourche de glace or Ice river, sometimes called the Grand Rond. Here they found all the plains and valleys wrapped in one vast conflagration; which swept over the long grass in billows of flame,

shot up every bush and tree, rose in great columns from the groves, and sent up clouds of smoke that darkened the atmosphere. To avoid this sea of fire, the travellers had to pursue their course close along the foot of the mountains ; but the irritation from the smoke continued to be tormenting.

The country about the head waters of the Grand Rond, spreads out into broad and level prairies, extremely fertile, and watered by mountain springs and rivulets. These prairies are resorted to by small bands of the Skynses, to pasture their horses, as well as to banquet upon the salmon which abound in the neighbouring waters. They catch these fish in great quantities and without the least difficulty ; simply taking them out of the water with their hands, as they flounder and struggle in the numerous long shoals of the principal stream. At the time the travellers passed over these

prairies, some of the narrow deep streams by which they were intersected, were completely choked with salmon, which they took in great numbers. The wolves and bears frequent these streams at this season, to avail themselves of these great fisheries.

The travellers continued, for many days, to experience great difficulties and discomforts from this wide conflagration, which seemed to embrace the whole wilderness. The sun was for a great part of the time obscured by the smoke, and the loftiest mountains were hidden from view. Blundering along in this region of mist and uncertainty, they were frequently obliged to make long circuits, to avoid obstacles which they could not perceive until close upon them. The Indian trails were their safest guides, for though they sometimes appeared to lead them out of their direct course, they always conducted them to the passes.

On the 26th of August, they reached the head of the Way-lee-way river. Here, in a valley of the mountains through which this head water makes its way, they found a band of the Skynses, who were extremely sociable, and appeared to be well disposed, and as they spoke the Nez Percé language, an intercourse was easily kept up with them.

In the pastures on the bank of this stream, Captain Bonneville encamped for a time, for the purpose of recruiting the strength of his horses. Scouts were now sent out to explore the surrounding country, and search for a convenient pass through the mountains towards the Wallamut or Multnomah.

After an absence of twenty days, they returned weary and discouraged. They had been harassed and perplexed in rugged mountain defiles, where their progress was continually impeded by rocks and precipices. Often they

had been obliged to travel along the edges of frightful ravines, where a false step would have been fatal. In one of these passes, a horse fell from the brink of a precipice, and would have been dashed to pieces, had he not lodged among the branches of a tree, from which he was extricated with great difficulty.

These, however, were not the worst of their difficulties and perils. The great conflagration of the country, which had harassed the main party in its march, was still more awful, the further this exploring party proceeded. The flames, which swept rapidly over the light vegetation of the prairies, assumed a fiercer character, and took a stronger hold amidst the wooded glens and ravines of the mountains. Some of the deep gorges and defiles sent up sheets of flame, and clouds of lurid smoke, and sparks and cinders, that in the night made them resemble the craters of volcanoes. The groves

and forests, too, that crowned the cliffs, shot up their towering columns of fire, and added to the furnace glow of the mountains. With these stupendous sights were combined the rushing blasts caused by the rarefied air, which roared and howled through the narrow glens, and whirled forth the smoke and flames in impetuous wreaths. Ever and anon, too, was heard the crash of falling trees, sometimes tumbling from crags and precipices, with tremendous sounds.

In the daytime, the mountains were wrapped in smoke so dense and blinding, that the explorers, if by chance they separated, could only find each other by shouting. Often, too, they had to grope their way through the yet burning forests, in constant peril from the limbs and trunks of trees which frequently fell across their path.

At length they gave up the attempt to find a pass as hopeless, under actual circumstances, and made their way back to the camp to report their failure.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SKYNSES—THEIR TRAFFIC—HUNTING—FOOD—HORSES—
HORSERACE—DEVOTIONAL FEELING OF THE SKYNSES, NEZ PERCES,
AND FLATHEADS—PRAYERS—EXHORTATIONS—A PREACHER ON
HORSEBACK—EFFECT OF RELIGION ON THE MANNERS OF THE
TRIBES—A NEW LIGHT.

DURING the absence of this detachment, a sociable intercourse had been kept up between the main party and the Skynses, who had removed into the neighbourhood of the camp. These people dwell about the waters of the Way-lee-way and the adjacent country, and

trade regularly with the Hudson's Bay Company ; generally giving horses in exchange for the articles of which they stand in need. They bring beaver skins, also, to the trading posts ; not procured by trapping, but by a course of internal traffic with the shy and ignorant Shoshokoes and Too-el-icans, who keep in distant and unfrequented parts of the country, and will not venture near the trading houses.

The Skynses hunt the deer and elk, occasionally ; and depend, for a part of the year, on fishing. Their main subsistence, however, is upon roots, especially the kamash. This bulbous root is said to be of a delicious flavour, and highly nutritious. The women dig it up in great quantities, steam it, and deposit it in caches for winter provisions. It grows spontaneously, and absolutely covers the plains.

This tribe were comfortably clad and equipped. They had a few rifles among them,

and were extremely desirous of bartering for those of Captain Bonneville's men; offering a couple of good running horses for a light rifle. Their first-rate horses, however, were not to be procured from them on any terms. They almost invariably use ponies; but of a breed infinitely superior to any in the United States. They are fond of trying their speed and bottom, and of betting upon them.

As Captain Bonneville was desirous of judging of the comparative merit of their horses, he purchased one of their racers, and had a trial of speed between that, an American, and a Shoshonie, which were supposed to be well matched. The race course was for the distance of one mile and a half out, and back. For the first half mile, the American took the lead, by a few hands; but, losing his wind, soon fell far behind; leaving the Shoshonie and Skynse to contend together. For a mile and a half, they

went head and head; but at the turn, the Skynse took the lead, and won the race with great ease: scarce drawing a quick breath when all was over.

The Skynses, like the Nez Percés and the Flatheads, have a strong devotional feeling, which has been successfully cultivated by some of the resident personages of the Hudson's Bay Company. Sunday is invariably kept sacred among these tribes. They will not raise their camp on that day, unless in extreme cases of danger or hunger: neither will they hunt, nor fish, nor trade, nor perform any kind of labour on that day. A part of it is passed in prayer and religious ceremonies.

Some chief, who is, generally, at the same time what is called a "medicine man," assembles the community. After invoking blessings from the Deity, he addresses the assemblage;

exhorting them to good conduct; to be diligent in providing for their families; to abstain from lying and stealing; to avoid quarrelling or cheating in their play, and to be just and hospitable to all strangers who may be among them. Prayers and exhortations are also made, early in the morning, on weekdays. Sometimes, all this is done by the chief, from horseback; moving slowly about the camp, with his hat on, and uttering his exhortations with a loud voice. On all occasions, the bystanders listen with profound attention; and at the end of every sentence, respond one word in unison; apparently equivalent to an amen.

While these prayers and exhortations are going on, every employment in the camp is suspended. If an Indian is riding by the place, he dismounts, holds his horse, and attends with reverence until all is done. When the chief

has finished his prayer, or exhortation, he says, "I have done;" upon which there is a general exclamation in unison.

With these religious services, probably derived from the white men, the tribes above-mentioned, mingle some of their old Indian ceremonials: such as dancing to the cadence of a song or ballad; which is generally done in a large lodge, provided for the purpose. Beside Sundays, they likewise observe the cardinal holidays of the Roman Catholic Church.

Whoever has introduced these simple forms of religion among these poor savages, has evidently understood their characters and capacities, and has effected a great amelioration of their manners. Of this, we speak not merely from the testimony of Captain Bonneville, but, likewise, from that of Captain Wyeth, who passed some months in a travelling camp of the Flatheads.

“ During the time I have been with them,” says he, “ I have never known an instance of theft among them: the least thing, even to a bead or pin, is brought to you, if found; and often, things that have been thrown away. Neither have I known any quarrelling, nor lying. This absence of all quarrelling the more surprised me, when I came to see the various occasions that would have given rise to it among the whites: the crowding together of from twelve to eighteen hundred horses, which have to be driven into camp at night, to be picketed; to be packed in the morning: the gathering of fuel in places where it is extremely scanty. All this, however, is done without confusion or disturbance.

“ They have a mild, playful, laughing disposition; and this is portrayed in their countenances. They are polite and unobtrusive. When one speaks, the rest pay strict attention:

when he is done, another assents by 'yes,' or dissents by 'no;' and then states his reasons; which are listened to with equal attention. Even the children are more peaceable than other children. I never heard an angry word among them, nor any quarrelling; although there were, at least, five hundred of them together, and continually at play. With all this quietness of spirit, they are brave when put to the test; and are an overmatch for an equal number of Blackfeet."

The foregoing observations, though gathered from Captain Wyeth as relative to the Flatheads, apply, in the main, to the Skynses, also. Captain Bonneville, during his sojourn with the latter, took constant occasion, in conversing with their principal men, to encourage them in the cultivation of moral and religious habits; drawing a comparison between their peaceable and comfortable course of life, and

that of other tribes: and attributing it to their superior sense of morality and religion. He frequently attended their religious services, with his people; always enjoining on the latter the most reverential deportment; and he observed that the poor Indians were always pleased to have the white men present.

The disposition of these tribes is evidently favourable to a considerable degree of civilization. A few farmers, settled among them, might lead them, Captain Bonneville thinks, to till the earth and cultivate grain: the country of the Skynses, and Nez Percés, is admirably adapted for the raising of cattle. A Christian missionary or two, and some trifling assistance from government, to protect them from the predatory and warlike tribes, might lay the foundation of a Christian people in the midst of the great western wilderness, who would “wear the Americans near their hearts.”

We must not omit to observe, however, in qualification of the sanctity of this Sabbath in the wilderness, that these tribes, who are all ardently addicted to gambling and horseracing, make Sunday a peculiar day for recreations of the kind, not deeming them in any wise out of season.

“After prayers and pious ceremonies are over, there is scarce an hour in the day,” says Captain Bonneville, “that you do not see several horses racing at full speed; and in every corner of the camp, are groups of gamblers, ready to stake every thing upon the all-absorbing game of hand.”

“The Indians,” says Captain Wyeth, “appear to enjoy their amusements with more zest than the whites. They are great gamblers; and in proportion to their means, play bolder, and bet higher than white men.”

The cultivation of the religious feeling, above

noted, among the savages, has been, at times, a convenient policy, with some of the more knowing traders; who have derived great credit and influence among them; by being considered "medicine men:" that is, men gifted with mysterious knowledge. This feeling is, also, at times, played upon by religious charlatans; who are to be found in savage, as well as civilized life. One of these was noted by Captain Wyeth, during his sojourn among the Flatheads.

"A new great man," says he, "is rising in the camp, who aims at power and sway. He covers his designs under the ample cloak of religion; inculcating some new doctrines and ceremonials among those who are more simple than himself. He has already made proselytes of one-fifth of the camp; beginning by working on the women, the children, and the weak-minded. His followers are all dancing on the

plain, to their own vocal music. The more knowing ones of the tribe look on and laugh; thinking it all too foolish to do harm: but they will soon find that women, children, and fools, form a large majority of every community; and they will have, eventually, to follow the new light, or be considered among the profane. As soon as a preacher, or pseudo prophet of the kind, gets followers enough, he either takes command of the tribe, or branches off and sets up for an independent chief and ‘medicine man.’”

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CHAPTER XIV.

SCARCITY IN THE CAMP—REFUSAL OF SUPPLIES BY THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY—CONDUCT OF THE INDIANS—A HUNGRY RETREAT JOHN DAY'S RIVER—THE BLUE MOUNTAINS—SALMON FISHING ON SNAKE RIVER—MESSENGERS FROM THE CROW'S COUNTRY—BEAR RIVER VALLEY—IMMENSE MIGRATION OF BUFFALO—DANGER OF BUFFALO HUNTING—A WOUNDED INDIAN—EUTAW INDIANS—A "SURROUND" OF ANTELOPES.

PROVISIONS were now growing scanty in the camp, and Captain Bonneville found it necessary to seek a new neighbourhood. Taking leave, therefore, of his friends, the Skynses, he set off to the westward, and crossing a low

range of mountains, encamped on the head waters of the Ottolais.

Being now within thirty miles of Fort Wallah-Wallah, the trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, he sent a small detachment of men thither, to purchase corn for the subsistence of his party. The men were well received at the fort; but all supplies for their camp were peremptorily refused. Tempting offers were made them, however, if they would leave their present employ, and enter into the service of the company; but they were not to be seduced.

When Captain Bonneville saw his messengers return empty handed, he ordered an instant move, for there was imminent danger of famine. He pushed forward down the course of the Ottolais, which runs diagonal to the Columbia, and falls into it about fifty miles below the Wallah-Wallah. His route lay

through a beautiful undulating country, covered with horses belonging to the Skynses, who sent them there for pasturage.

On reaching the Columbia, Captain Bonneville hoped to open a trade with the natives, for fish and other provisions, but to his surprise, they kept aloof, and even hid themselves on his approach. He soon discovered that they were under the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company, who had forbidden them to trade, or hold any communion with him. He proceeded along the Columbia, but it was everywhere the same; not an article of provisions was to be obtained from the natives, and he was, at length, obliged to kill a couple of his horses to sustain his famishing people.

He now came to a halt, and consulted what was to be done. The broad and beautiful Columbia lay before them, smooth and unruffled as a mirror; a little more journeying

would take them to its lower region; to the noble valley of the Wallamut, their projected winter quarters.

The advance under present circumstances would be to court starvation. The resources of the country were locked against them, by the influence of a jealous and powerful monopoly. If they reached the Wallamut, they could scarcely hope to obtain sufficient supplies for the winter; if they lingered any longer in the country, the snows would gather upon the mountains and cut off their retreat. By hastening their return, they would be able to reach the Blue mountains just in time to find the elk, the deer, and the bighorn; and after they had supplied themselves with provisions, they might push through the mountains, before they were entirely blocked up by snow.

Influenced by these considerations, Captain Bonneville reluctantly turned his back a second

time on the Colombia, and set off for the Blue mountains. He took his course up John Day's river, so called from one of the hunters in the original Astorian enterprise. As famine was at his heels, he travelled fast, and reached the mountains by the 1st of October. He entered by the opening made by John Day's river, it was a rugged and difficult defile, but he and his men had become accustomed to hard scrambles of the kind. Fortunately, the September rains had extinguished the fires that recently spread over these regions; and the mountains no longer wrapped in smoke, now revealed all their grandeur and sublimity to the eye.

They were disappointed in their expectation of finding abundant game in the mountains; large bands of the natives had passed through, returning from their fishing expeditions, and had driven all the game before them. It was only now and then that the hunters could bring

in sufficient to keep the party from starvation. —To add to their distress they mistook their route, and wandered for ten days among high and bald hills of clay. At length, after much perplexity, they made their way to the banks of Snake river, following the course of which, they were sure to reach their place of destination.

It was the 20th of October when they found themselves once more upon this noted stream. The Shoshokoes, whom they had met with in scanty numbers on their journey down the river, now absolutely thronged its banks, to profit by the abundance of salmon, and lay up a stock for winter provisions. Scaffolds were everywhere erected, and immense quantities of fish drying upon them. At this season of the year, however, the salmon are extremely poor, and the travellers needed their keen sauce of hunger to give them a relish.

In some places the shores were completely covered with a stratum of dead salmon, exhausted in ascending the river, or destroyed at the falls; the fetid odour of which tainted the air.

It was not until the travellers reached the head waters of the Portneuf, that they really found themselves in a region of abundance. Here the buffalo were in immense herds; and here they remained for three days slaying and cooking, and feasting, and indemnifying themselves by an enormous Carnival, for a long and hungry Lent. Their horses, too, found good pasturage, and enjoyed a little rest after a severe spell of hard travelling.

During this period two horsemen arrived at the camp, who proved to be messengers sent express for supplies, from Montero's party; which had been sent to beat up the Crow country and the Black hills, and to winter on

the Arkansas. They reported that all was well with the party, but that they had not been able to accomplish the whole of their mission, and were still in the Crow country, where they should remain until joined by Captain Bonneville in the spring. The captain retained the messengers with him until the 17th of November, when, having reached the caches on Bear river, and procured thence the required supplies, he sent them back to their party; appointing a rendezvous towards the last of June, following, on the forks of Wind river valley, in the Crow country.

He now remained several days encamped near the caches, and having discovered a small band of Shoshonies in his neighbourhood, purchased from them lodges, furs, and other articles of winter comfort, and arranged with them to encamp together during the winter.

The place designed by the captain for the wintering ground, was on the upper part of Bear river, some distance off. He delayed approaching it as long as possible, in order to avoid driving off the buffalo, which would be needed for winter provisions. He accordingly moved forward but slowly, merely as the want of game and grass obliged him to shift his position. The weather had already become extremely cold, and the snow lay to a considerable depth.¹ To enable the horses to carry as much dried meat as possible, he caused a cache to be made, in which all the baggage that could be spared was deposited. This done, the party continued to move slowly toward their winter quarters.

They were not doomed, however, to suffer from scarcity during the present winter. The people upon Snake river having chased off the

buffalo before the snow had become deep, immense herds now came trooping over the mountains; forming dark masses on their sides, from which their deep-mouthed bellowing sounded like the low peals and mutterings from a gathering thunder cloud. In effect, the cloud broke, and down came the torrent thundering into the valley. It is utterly impossible, according to Captain Bonneville, to convey an idea of the effect produced by the sight of such countless throngs of animals of such bulk and spirit, all rushing forward as if swept on by a whirlwind.

The long privations which the travellers had suffered, gave uncommon ardour to their present hunting. One of the Indians attached to the party, finding himself on horseback in the midst of the buffaloes, without either rifle or bow and arrows, dashed after a fine cow that

was passing close by him, and plunged his knife into her side with such lucky aim as to bring her to the ground. It was a daring deed; but hunger had made him almost desperate.

The buffaloes are sometimes tenacious of life, and must be wounded in particular parts. A ball striking the shagged frontlet of a bull produces no other effect than a toss of the head, and greater exasperation; on the contrary, a ball striking the forehead of a cow, is fatal. Several instances occurred during this great hunting bout, of bulls fighting furiously, after having received mortal wounds. Captain Wyeth, also, was witness to an instance of the kind, while encamped with Indians. During a grand hunt of the buffalo, one of the Indians pressed a bull so closely, that the animal turned suddenly upon him. His horse stopped short,

or started back, and threw him. Before he could rise, the bull rushed furiously upon him, and gored him in the chest, so that his breath came out at the aperture. He was conveyed back to the camp, and his wound was dressed.

Giving himself up for slain, he called round him his friends, and made his will by word of mouth. It was something like a death chant, and at the end of every sentence, those around responded in concord. He appeared nowise intimidated by the approach of death.

“ I think,” adds Captain Wyeth, “the Indians die better than the white men; perhaps, from having less fear about the future.”

The buffalo may be approached very near, if the hunter keeps to the leeward; but

they are quick of scent, and will take the alarm and move off from a party of hunters, to the windward, even when two miles distant.

The vast herds which had poured down into the Bear river valley, were now snow bound, and remained in the neighbourhood of the camp throughout the winter. This furnished the trappers and their Indian friends a perpetual Carnival; so that, to slay and eat seemed to be the main occupations of the day. It is astonishing what loads of meat it requires to cope with the appetite of a hunting camp.

The ravens and wolves soon came in for their share of the good cheer. These constant attendants of the hunters gathered in vast numbers as the winter advanced. They might be completely out of sight, but at the

report of a gun, flights of ravens would immediately be seen hovering in the air, no one knew from whence they came; while the sharp visages of the wolves would peep down from the brow of every hill waiting for the hunter's departure to pounce upon the carcass.

Beside the buffaloes, there were other neighbours snow bound in the valley, whose presence did not promise to be so advantageous. This was a band of Eutaw Indians, who were encamped higher up on the river. They are a poor tribe, that, in the scale of the various tribes inhabiting these regions, would rank between the Shoshonies and the Shoshokoes or Root Diggers; though more bold and warlike than the latter. They have but few rifles among them, and are generally armed with bows and arrows.

As this band and the Shoshonies were at deadly feud, on account of old grievances, and as neither party stood in awe of the other, it was feared some bloody scenes might ensue. Captain Bonneville, therefore undertook the office of pacificator, and sent to the Eutaw chiefs, inviting them to a friendly smoke, in order to bring about a reconciliation. His invitation was proudly declined; whereupon he went to them in person, and succeeded in effecting a suspension of hostilities, until the chiefs of the two tribes could meet in council.

The braves of the two rival camps sullenly acquiesced in the arrangement. They would take their seats upon the hill tops, and watch their quondam enemies hunting the buffalo in the plain below, and evidently repine, that their hands were tied up from a skirmish.

The worthy captain, however, succeeded in carrying through his benevolent mediation. The chiefs met; the amicable pipe was smoked, the hatchet buried, and peace formally proclaimed.

After this, both camps united and mingled in social intercourse. Private quarrels, however, would occasionally occur in hunting, about the division of the game, and blows would sometimes be exchanged over the carcass of a buffalo; but the chiefs wisely took no notice of these individual brawls.

One day, the scouts, who had been ranging the hills, brought news of several large herds of antelopes in a small valley at no great distance. This produced a sensation among the Indians, for both tribes were in ragged condition, and sadly in want of those shirts made of the skin of the antelope. It

was determined to have "a surround," as the mode of hunting that animal is called.

Every thing now assumed an air of mystic solemnity and importance. The chiefs prepared their medicines or charms, each according to his own method, or fancied inspiration, generally with the compound of certain simples ; others consulted the entrails of animals which they had sacrificed, and thence drew favourable auguries.

After much grave smoking and deliberating, it was at length proclaimed, that all who were able to lift a club, man, woman, or child, should muster for the "surround." When all had congregated, they moved in rude procession to the nearest point of the valley in question, and there halted.

Another course of smoking and deliberating, of which the Indians are so fond, took place

among the chiefs. Directions were then issued for the horsemen to make a circuit of about seven miles, so as to encompass the herd. When this was done, the whole mounted force dashed off, simultaneously, at full speed, shouting and yelling at the top of their voices.

In a short space of time, the antelopes, started from their hiding places, came bounding from all parts into the valley. The riders now gradually contracting their circle, brought them nearer and nearer to the spot, where the senior chief, surrounded by the elders, male and female, was seated in supervision of the chase. The antelopes, nearly exhausted with fatigue and fright, and bewildered by perpetual whooping, made no effort to break through the ring of the hunters, but ran round in small circles, until man,

woman, and child, beat them down with bludgeons.

Such is the nature of that species of antelope hunting, technically called a "surround."

CHAPTER XV.

A FESTIVE WINTER—CONVERSION OF THE SHOSHONIES—VISIT OF TWO
FREE TRAPPERS—GAIETY IN THE CAMP—A TOUCH OF THE TEN-
DER PASSION—THE RECLAIMED SQUAW—AN INDIAN FINE LADY—
AN ELOPEMENT—A PURSUIT—MARKET VALUE OF A BAD WIFE.

GAME continued to abound throughout the winter; and the camp was overstocked with provisions. Beef and venison, humps and haunches, buffalo tongues and marrowbones, were constantly cooking at every fire; and the whole atmosphere was redolent with the sa-

voury fumes of roast meat. It was, indeed, a continual "feast of fat things," and though there might be a lack of "wine upon the lees," yet, we have shown that a substitute was occasionally to be found in honey and alcohol.

Both the Shoshonies and the Eutaws conducted themselves with great propriety. It is true, they now and then filched a few trifles from their good friends, the Big Hearts, when their backs were turned ; but then, they always treated them, to their faces, with the utmost deference and respect ; and good-humouredly vied with the trappers in all kinds of feats of activity and mirthful sports. The two tribes maintained towards each other, also, a friendliness of aspect, which gave Captain Bonneville reason to hope that all past animosity was effectually buried.

The two rival bands, however, had not long been mingled in this social manner, before their

ancient jealousy began to break out in a new form. The senior chief of the Shoshonies was a thinking man, and a man of observation. He had been among the Nez Percés; listened to their new code of morality and religion received from the white men, and attended their devotional exercises. He had observed the effect of all this, in elevating the tribe in the estimation of the white men; and determined, by the same means, to gain for his own tribe a superiority over their ignorant rivals, the Eutaws.

He accordingly assembled his people, and promulgated among them the mongrel doctrines and form of worship of the Nez Percés; recommending the same to their adoption. The Shoshonies were struck with the novelty, at least, of the measure, and entered into it with spirit. They began to observe Sundays and holidays, and to have their devotional

dances, and chants, and other ceremonials; about which, the ignorant Eutaws knew nothing: while they exerted their usual competition in shooting and horseracing, and the renowned game of hand.

Matters were going on thus pleasantly and prosperously, in this motley community of white and red men, when, one morning, two stark free trappers, arrayed in the height of savage finery, and mounted on steeds as fine and fiery as themselves, and all jingling with hawks' bells, came galloping, with whoop and halloo, into the camp.

They were fresh from the winter encampment of the American Fur Company, in the Green river valley; and had come to pay their old comrades of Captain Bonneville's company a visit. An idea may be formed from the scenes we have already given of conviviality in the wilderness, of the manner in which these game

birds were received by those of their feather in the camp. What feasting; what revelling; what boasting; what bragging; what ranting and roaring, and racing and gambling, and squabbling and fighting, ensued among these boon companions. Captain Bonneville, it is true, maintained always a certain degree of law and order in his camp, and checked each fierce excess: but the trappers, in their seasons of idleness and relaxation, require a degree of license and indulgence, to repay them for the long privations, and almost incredible hardships of their periods of active service.

In the midst of all this feasting and frolicking, a freak of the tender passion intervened, and wrought a complete change in the scene. Among the Indian beauties in the camp of the Eutaws and Shoshonies, the free trappers discovered two, who had whilom figured as their

squaws. These connexions frequently take place for a season; and sometimes, continue for years, if not perpetually; but are apt to be broken when the free trapper starts off, suddenly, on some distant and rough expedition.

In the present instance, these wild blades were anxious to regain their bellies: nor were the latter loath once more to come under their protection. The free trapper combines, in the eye of an Indian girl, all that is dashing and heroic, in a warrior of her own race, whose gait, and garb, and bravery he emulates, with all that is gallant and glorious in the white man. And then the indulgence with which he treats her; the finery in which he decks her out: the state in which she moves; the sway she enjoys over both his purse and person, instead of being the drudge and slave of an Indian husband:

obliged to carry his pack, and build his lodge, and make his fire, and bear his cross humours and dry blows.—No; there is no comparison, in the eyes of an aspiring belle of the wilderness, between a free trapper and an Indian brave.

With respect to one of the parties, the matter was easily arranged. The beauty in question was a pert little Eutaw wench, that had been taken prisoner, in some war excursion, by a Shoshonie. She was readily ransomed for a few articles of trifling value; and forthwith figured about the camp in fine array, “with rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes,” and a tossed-up, coquettish air, that made her the envy, admiration, and abhorrence, of all the leathern-dressed, hard-working squaws of her acquaintancé.

As to the other beauty, it was quite a differ-

ent matter. She had become the wife of a Shoshonie brave. It is true, he had another wife, of older date than the one in question ; who, therefore, took command in his household, and treated his new spouse as a slave : but the latter was the wife of his last fancy, his latest caprice ; and was precious in his eyes. All attempt to bargain with him, therefore, was useless : the very proposition was repulsed with anger and disdain. The spirit of the trapper was roused ; his pride was piqued as well as his passion. He endeavoured to prevail upon his quondam mistress to elope with him. His horses were fleet ; the winter nights were long and dark : before daylight, they would be beyond the reach of pursuit ; and once at the encampment in Green river valley, they might set the whole band of Shoshonies at defiance.

The Indian girl listened and longed. Her heart yearned after the ease and splendour of condition of a trapper's bride, and throbbed to be freed from the capricious control of the premier squaw; but she dreaded the failure of the plan, and the fury of a Shoshonie husband. They parted; the Indian girl in tears, and the madcap trapper more mad than ever, with his thwarted passion.

Their interviews had, probably, been detected, and the jealousy of the Shoshonie brave aroused; a clamour of angry voices was heard in his lodge, with the sound of blows, and of female weeping and lamenting. At night, as the trapper lay tossing on his pallet, a soft voice whispered at the door of his lodge. His mistress stood trembling before him. She was ready to follow whithersoever he would lead.

In an instant, he was up and out. He had two prime horses, sure, and swift of foot, and of great wind. With stealthy quiet, they were brought up and saddled; and, in a few moments, he and his prize were careering over the snow, with which the whole country was covered. In the eagerness of escape, they had made no provisions for the journey: days must elapse before they could reach their haven of safety, and mountains and prairies be traversed, wrapped in all the desolation of winter. For the present, however, they thought of nothing but flight; urging their horses forward over the dreary wastes, and fancying, in the howling of every blast, they heard the yell of the pursuer.

At early dawn, the Shoshonie became aware of his loss. Mounting his swiftest horse,

he set off in hot pursuit. He soon found the trail of the fugitives, and spurred on in hopes of overtaking them. The winds, however, which swept the valley, had drifted the light snow into the prints made by the horses' hoofs. In a little while, he lost all trace of them, and was completely thrown out of the chase. He knew, however, the situation of the camp toward which they were bound, and a direct course through the mountains, by which he might arrive there sooner than the fugitives. Through the most rugged defiles, therefore, he urged his course day and night, scarce pausing until he reached the camp.

It was some time before the fugitives made their appearance. Six days, had they been traversing the wintry wilds. They came, haggard with hunger and fatigue, and their horses faltering under them. The first object

that met their eyes, on entering the camp, was the Shoshonie brave. He rushed, knife in hand, to plunge it in the heart that had proved false to him. The trapper threw himself before the cowering form of his mistress, and, feeble and exhausted as he was, prepared for a deadly struggle. The Shoshonie paused. His habitual awe of the white man checked his arm; the trapper's friends crowded to the spot, and arrested him.

A parley ensued. A kind of *crim. con.* adjudication took place; such as frequently occurs in civilized life. A couple of horses were declared to be a fair compensstion for the loss of a woman who had previously lost her heart: with this, the Shoshonie brave was fain to pacify his passion. He returned to Captain Bonneville's camp, somewhat crest-fallen, it is true; but parried the officious

condolements of his friends, by observing, that two good horses were very good pay for one bad wife.

CHAPTER XVI.

BREAKING UP OF WINTER QUARTERS—MOVE TO GREEN RIVER—A TRAPPER AND HIS RIFLE—AN ARRIVAL IN CAMP—A FREE TRAPPER AND HIS SQUAW IN DISTRESS — STORY OF A BLACKFOOT BELLE.

THE winter was now breaking up, the snows were melting from the hills, and from the lower parts of the mountains, and the time for decamping had arrived. Captain Bonneville despatched a party to the caches, who brought away all the effects concealed there, and on the

1st of April (1835), the camp was broken up and every one on the move. The white men and their allies, the Eutaws and Shóshonies, parted with many regrets and sincere expressions of good-will, for their intercourse throughout the winter had been of the most friendly kind.

Captain Bonneville and his party passed by Ham's fork, and reached the Colorado, or Green river, without accident, on the banks of which they remained during the residue of the spring. During this time, they were conscious that a band of hostile Indians were hovering about their vicinity, watching for an opportunity to slay or steal; but the vigilant precautions of Captain Bonneville baffled all their manœuvres.

In such dangerous times, the experienced mountaineer is never without his rifle, even in

camp. On going from lodge to lodge to visit his comrades, he takes it with him. On seating himself in a lodge, he lays it beside him, ready to be snatched up; when he goes out, he takes it up as regularly as a citizen would his walking staff. His rifle is his constant friend and protector.

On the 10th of June, the party were a little to the east of the Wind river mountains, where they halted for a time in excellent pasturage, to give their horses a chance to recruit their strength for a long journey; for it was Captain Bonneville's intention to shape his course to the settlements; having already been detained by the complication of his duties, and by various losses and impediments, far beyond the time specified in his leave of absence.

While the party was thus reposing in the neighbourhood of the Wind river mountains, a

solitary free trapper rode one day into the camp, and accosted Captain Bonneville. He belonged, he said, to a party of thirty hunters, who had just past through the neighbourhood, but whom he had abandoned in consequence of their ill treatment of a brother trapper; whom they had cast off from their party, and left with his bag and baggage, and an Indian wife into the bargain, in the midst of a desolate prairie. The horseman gave a piteous account of the situation of this helpless pair, and solicited the loan of horses to bring them and their effects to the camp.

The captain was not a man to refuse assistance to any one in distress, especially when there was a woman in the case; horses were immediately despatched, with an escort, to the aid of the unfortunate couple. The next day, they made their appearance with all their

effects: the man, a stalwart mountaineer, with a peculiarly game look; the woman, a young Blackfoot beauty, arrayed in the trappings and trinketry of a free trapper's bride.

Finding the woman to be quickwitted and communicative, Captain Bonneville entered into conversation with her, and obtained from her many particulars concerning the habits and customs of her tribe; especially their wars and huntings. They pride themselves on being the "best legs of the mountains," and hunt the buffalo on foot. This is done in spring time, when the frosts have thawed and the ground is soft. The heavy buffalo then sink over their hoofs at every step, and are easily overtaken by the Blackfeet; whose fleet steps press lightly on the surface. It is said, however, that the buffalo on the Pacific side of the Rocky mountains are fleeter and more active

than on the Atlantic side; those upon the plains of the Columbia can scarcely be overtaken by a horse that would outstrip the same animal in the neighbourhood of the Platte, the usual hunting ground of the Blackfeet.

In the course of further conversation, Captain Bonneville drew from the Indian woman her whole story; which gave a picture of savage life, and of the drudgery and hardships to which an Indian wife is subject.

“ I was the wife,” said she, “ of a Blackfoot warrior, and I served him faithfully. Who was so well served as he? Whose lodge was so well provided, or kept so clean? I brought wood in the morning, and placed water always at hand. I watched for his coming; and he found his meat cooked and ready. If he rose to go forth, there was nothing to delay him.

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I searched the thought that was in his heart, to save him the trouble of speaking. When I went abroad on errands for him, the chiefs and warriors smiled upon me, and the young braves spoke soft things in secret; but my feet were in the straight path, and my eyes could see nothing but him.

“ Whe he went out to hunt or to war, who aided to equip him, but I? When he returned, I met him at the door; I took his gun; and he entered without further thought. While he sat and smoked, I unloaded his horses; tied them to the stakes; brought in their loads, and was quickly at his feet. If his moccasins were wet, I took them off, and put on others, which were dry and warm. I dressed all the skins he had taken in the chase. He could never say to me, why is it not done? He hunted the deer, the antelope, and the buffalo, and he

watched for the enemy. Every thing else was done by me.

“ When our people moved their camp, he mounted his horse and rode away ; free as though he had fallen from the skies. He had nothing to do with the labour of the camp : it was I that packed the horses, and led them on the journey. When we halted in the evening, and he sat with the other braves and smoked, it was I that pitched his lodge ; and when he came to eat and sleep, his supper and his bed were ready.

“ I served him faithfully ; and what was my reward ? A cloud was always on his brow, and sharp lightning on his tongue. I was his dog ; and not his wife.

“ Who was it that scarred and bruised me ? It was he. My brother saw how I was treated. His heart was big for me. He

begged me to leave my tyrant and fly. Where could I go? If retaken, who would protect me? My brother was not a chief; he could not save me from blows and wounds, from perhaps death.

“At length, I was persuaded. I followed my brother from the village. He pointed the way to the Nez Percés, and bade me go and live in peace among them. We parted. On the third day I saw the lodges of the Nez Percés before me. I paused for a moment, and had no heart to go on; but my horse neighed, and I took it as a good sign, and suffered him to gallop forward. In a little while, I was in the midst of the lodges.

“As I sat silent on my horse, the people gathered round me, and inquired whence I came. I told my story. A chief now wrap-

ped his blanket close around him, and bade me dismount. I obeyed. He took my horse, to lead him away. My heart grew small within me. I felt, on parting with my horse, as if my last friend was gone. I had no words, and my eyes were dry.

“As he led off my horse, a young brave stepped forward. ‘Are you a chief of the people?’ cried he. ‘Do we listen to you in council, and follow you in battle? Behold! a stranger flies to our camp from the dogs of Blackfeet, and asks protection. Let shame cover your face! The stranger is a woman and alone. If she were a warrior, or had a warrior by her side, your heart would not be big enough to take her horse. But he is yours. By the right of war you may claim him; but look!’—his bow was drawn, and the arrow ready:—‘you shall never cross his

back !' The arrow pierced the heart of the horse, and he fell dead.

"An old woman said she would be my mother. She led me to her lodge: my heart was thawed by her kindness, and my eyes burst forth with tears; like the frozen fountains in spring time. She never changed; but as the days passed away, was still a mother to me. The people were loud in praise of the young brave, and the chief was ashamed. I lived in peace.

"A party of trappers came to the village, and one of them took me for his wife. This is he. I am very happy; he treats me with kindness, and I have taught him the language of my people.

"As we were travelling this way some of the Blackfeet warriors beset us, and carried off the horses of the party. We followed,

and my husband held a parley with them. The guns were laid down, and the pipe was lighted; but some of the white men attempted to seize the horses by force, and then a battle began. The snow was deep; the white men sank into it at every step; but the red men, with their snowshoes, passed over the surface like birds, and drove off many of the horses in sight of their owners. With those that remained we resumed our journey.

“At length, words took place between the leader of the party and my husband. He took away our horses, which had escaped in the battle, and turned us from his camp. My husband had one good friend among the trappers. That is he (pointing to the man who had asked assistance for them). He is a good man. His heart is big. When he came in

from hunting, and found that we had been driven away, he gave up all his wages, and followed us, that he might speak good words for us to the white captain."

CHAPTER XVII.

A RENDEZVOUS AT WIND RIVER—CAMPAIGN OF MONTERO AND HIS BRIGADE IN THE CROW COUNTRY—WARS BETWEEN THE CROWS AND BLACKFEET—DEATH OF ARAPOOISH—BLACKFEET LURKERS—SAGACITY OF THE HORSE—DEPENDANCE OF THE HUNTER ON HIS HORSE—RETURN TO THE SETTLEMENTS.

ON the 22d of June, Captain Bonneville raised his camp, and moved to the forks of Wind river; the appointed place of rendezvous. In a few days, he was joined there by the brigade of Montero, which had been

sent, in the preceding year, to beat up the Crow country, and afterwards proceed to the Arkansas. Montero had followed the early part of his instructions; after trapping upon some of the upper streams, he proceeded to Powder river. Here he fell in with the Crow villages or bands, who treated him with unusual kindness, and prevailed upon him to take up his winter quarters among them.

The Crows, at that time, were struggling almost for existence, with their old enemies, the Blackfeet; who, in the past year, had picked off the flower of their warriors in various engagements, and among the rest, Arapooish, the friend of the white men. That sagacious and magnanimous chief, had beheld with grief, the ravages which war was making in his tribe, and that it was declining in force, and must eventually be destroyed,

unless some signal blow could be struck to retrieve its fortunes. In a pitched battle of the two tribes, he made a speech to his warriors, urging them to set every thing at hazard in one furious charge; which done, he led the way into the thickest of the foe. He was soon separated from his men, and fell covered with wounds, but his self-devotion was not in vain. The Blackfeet were defeated; and from that time the Crows plucked up fresh heart, and were frequently successful.

Montero had not been long encamped among them, when he discovered that the Blackfeet were hovering about the neighbourhood. One day the hunters came galloping into the camp, and proclaimed that a band of the enemy was at hand. The Crows flew to arms, leaped on their horses, and dashed out in squadrons in pursuit. They overtook the retreating enemy

in the midst of a plain. A desperate fight ensued. The Crows had the advantage of numbers, and of fighting on horseback. The greater part of the Blackfeet were slain; the remnant took shelter in a close thicket of willows, where the horse could not enter; from whence they plied their bows vigorously.

The Crows drew off out of bow shot, and endeavoured by taunts and bravadoes, to draw the warriors out of their retreat. A few of the best mounted among them, rode apart from the rest. One of their number then advanced alone, with that martial air and equestrian grace for which the tribe is noted. When within an arrow's flight of the thicket, he loosened his rein, urged his horse to full speed, threw his body on the opposite side, so as to hang by but one leg, and present no mark to the foe; in this way, he swept along in front of the thicket, launching his arrows from under

the neck of his steed. Then regaining his seat in the saddle, he wheeled round, and returned whooping and scoffing to his companions, who received him with yells of applause.

Another and another horseman repeated this exploit; but the Blackfeet were not to be taunted out of their safe shelter. The victors feared to drive desperate men to extremities, so they forbore to attempt the thicket. Towards night they gave over the attack, and returned all glorious with the scalps of the slain.

Then came on the usual feasts and triumphs; the scalp dance of warriors round the ghastly trophies, and all the other fierce revelry of barbarous warfare. When the braves had finished with the scalps, they were, as usual, given up to the women and children, and made the objects of new parades and dances. They were then treasured up as invaluable tro-

phies and decorations by the braves who had won them.

It is worthy of note that the scalp of a white man, either through policy or fear, is treated with more charity than that of an Indian. The warrior who won it is entitled to his triumph if he demands it. In such case, the war party alone dance round the scalp. It is then taken down; and the shagged frontlet of a buffalo substituted in its place, and abandoned to the triumphs and insults of the million.

To avoid being involved in these guerillas as well as to escape from the extremely social intercourse of the Crows, which began to be oppressive, Montero moved to the distance of several miles from their camps, and there formed a winter cantonment of huts. He now maintained a vigilant watch at night. Their horses which were turned loose to graze during the day, under heedful eyes, were brought in at

night, and shut up in strong pens, built of large logs of cotton-wood.

The snows during a portion of the winter, were so deep that the poor animals could find but little sustenance. Here and there a tuft of grass would peer above the snow; but they were in general driven to browse the twigs and tender branches of the trees. When they were turned out in the morning, the first moments of freedom from the confinement of the pen were spent in frisking and gambolling. This done, they went soberly and sadly to work, to glean their scanty subsistence for the day. In the mean time, the men stripped the bark of the cotton-wood tree for the evening fodder.

As the poor horses would return towards night, with sluggish and dispirited air, the moment they saw their owners approaching them with blankets filled with cotton-wood bark, their whole demeanour underwent a change.

A universal neighing and capering took place; they would rush forward, smell to the blankets, paw the earth, snort, whinny and prance round with head and tail erect, until the blankets were opened, and the welcome provender spread before them. These evidences of intelligence and gladness were frequently recounted by the trappers as proving the sagacity of the animal.

These veteran rovers of the mountains look upon their horses as in some respects gifted with almost human intellect. An old and experienced trapper, when mounting guard about the camp in dark nights and times of peril, gives heedful attention to all the sounds and signs of the horses. No enemy enters or approaches the camp without attracting their notice, and their movements not only give a vague alarm, but it is said, will even indicate to the knowing trapper the very quarter whence danger threatens.

In the daytime, too, while a hunter is engaged on the prairie, cutting up the deer or buffalo he has slain, he depends upon his faithful horse as a sentinel. The sagacious animal sees and smells all round him, and by his starting and whinnying, gives notice of the approach of strangers. There seems to be a dumb communion and fellowship, a sort of fraternal sympathy between the hunter and his horse. They mutually rely upon each other for company and protection: and nothing is more difficult, it is said, than to surprise an experienced hunter on the prairie, while his old and favourite steed is at his side.

Montero had not long removed his camp from the vicinity of the Crows, and fixed himself in his new quarters, when the Blackfeet marauders discovered his cantonment, and began to haunt the vicinity. He kept up a vigilant watch, however, and foiled every attempt of the enemy,

who, at length, seemed to have given up in despair, and abandoned the neighbourhood. The trappers relaxed their vigilance, therefore; and one night, after a day of severe labour, no guards were posted, and the whole camp was soon asleep. Towards midnight, however, the lightest sleepers were aroused by the trampling of hoofs; and, giving the alarm, the whole party were immediately on their legs, and hastened to the pens. The bars were down; but no enemy was to be seen or heard, and the horses being all found hard by, it was supposed the bars had been left down through negligence.

All were once more asleep, when, in about an hour, there was a second alarm, and it was discovered that several horses were missing. The rest were mounted, and so spirited a pursuit took place, that eighteen of the number carried off were regained, and but three

remained in possession of the enemy. Traps, for wolves, had been set about the camp the preceding day. In the morning, it was discovered that a Blackfoot had been entrapped by one of them, but had succeeded in dragging it off. His trail was followed for a long distance, which he must have limped alone. At length, he appeared to have fallen in with some of his comrades, who had relieved him from his painful encumbrance.

These were the leading incidents of Montero's campaign in the Crow country. The united parties now celebrated the 4th of July, in rough hunters' style, with hearty conviviality; after which, Captain Bonneville made his final arrangements.

Leaving Montero with a brigade of trappers to open another campaign, he put himself at the head of the residue of his men, and set off on his return to civilized life. We shall not

detail his journey along the course of the Nebraska, and so, from point to point of the wilderness, until he and his band reached the frontier settlements on the 22d of August.

Here, according to his own account, his cavalcade might have been taken for a procession of tatterdemalion savages; for the men were ragged almost to nakedness, and had contracted a wildness of aspect during three years of wandering in the wilderness.

A few hours in a populous town, however, produced a magical metamorphosis. Hats of the most ample brim and longest nap; coats with buttons that shone like mirrors, and pantaloons of the most liberal plenitude, took place of the well-worn trapper's equipments; and the happy wearers might be seen strolling about in all directions, scattering their silver like sailors just from a cruise.

The worthy captain, however, seems by no

means to have shared the excitement of his men, on finding himself once more in the thronged resorts of civilized life, but, on the contrary, to have looked back to the wilderness with regret.

“ Though the prospect,” says he, “ of once more tasting the blessings of peaceful society, and passing days and nights under the calm guardianship of the laws, was not without its attractions; yet to those of us whose whole lives had been spent in the stirring excitement and perpetual watchfulness of adventures in the wilderness, the change was far from promising an increase of that contentment and inward satisfaction most conducive to happiness. He who, like myself, has roved almost from boyhood among the children of the forest, and over the unfurrowed plains and rugged heights of the western wastes, will not be startled to learn, that notwithstanding all the

fascinations of the world on this civilized side of the mountains, I would fain make my bow to the splendours and gaieties of the metropolis, and plunge again amidst the hardships and perils of the wilderness."

We have only to add, that the affairs of the captain have been satisfactorily arranged with the War Department, and that he is actually in service at Fort Gibson, on our western frontier; where we hope he may meet with further opportunities of indulging his peculiar tastes, and of collecting graphic and characteristic details of the great western wilds and their motley inhabitants.

WE here close our picturings of the Rocky mountains and their wild inhabitants, and of the wild life that prevails there; which we have been anxious to fix on record, because we

are aware that this singular state of things is full of mutation, and must soon undergo great changes, if not entirely pass away.

The fur trade, itself, which has given life to all this portraiture, is essentially evanescent. Rival parties of trappers soon exhaust the streams, especially when competition renders them heedless and wasteful of the beaver. The fur-bearing animals extinct, a complete change will come over the scene: the gay free trapper and his steed, decked out in wild array, and tinkling with bells and tinketry; the savage war chief, plumed and painted, and ever on the prowl; the traders' cavalcade, winding through defiles or over naked plains, with the stealthy war party lurking on its trail; the buffalo chase, the hunting camp, the mad carouse in the midst of danger, the night attack, the stampado, the scamper, the fierce skirmish among

rocks and cliffs,—all this romance of savage life, which yet exists among the mountains, will then exist but in frontier story, and seem like the fictions of chivalry or fairy tale.

Some new system of things, or rather some new modification, will succeed among the roving people of this vast wilderness: but just as opposite, perhaps to the habitudes of civilization. The great Chippewyan chain of mountains, and the sandy and volcanic plains that extend on either side, are represented as incapable of cultivation. The pasturage which prevails there during a certain portion of the year, soon withers under the aridity of the atmosphere, and leaves nothing but dreary wastes. An immense belt of rocky mountains and volcanic plains, several hundred miles in width, must ever remain an irreclaimable wilderness, intervening between

the abodes of civilization, and affording a last refuge to the Indian. Here, roving tribes of hunters, living in tents or lodges, and following the migrations of the game, may lead a life of savage independence, where there is nothing to tempt the cupidity of the white man. The amalgamation of various tribes, and of white men of every nation, will in time produce hybrid races like the mountain Tartars of the Caucasus. Possessed as they are of immense droves of horses, should they continue their present predatory and warlike habits, they may, in time, become a scourge to the civilized frontiers on either side of the mountains: as they are at present a terror to the traveller and trader.

The facts disclosed in the present work, clearly manifest the policy of establishing military posts and a mounted force to protect our traders in their journeys across the great

western wilds, and of pushing the outposts into the very heart of the singular wilderness we have laid open, so as to maintain some degree of sway over the country, and to put an end to the kind of "black mail," levied on all occasions by the savage "chivalry of the mountains."

APPENDIX.

CAPTAIN WYETH, AND THE TRADE OF THE FAR WEST.

WE have brought Captain Bonneville to the end of his western campaigning; yet we cannot close this work without subjoining some particulars concerning the fortunes of his contemporary, Captain Wyeth; anecdotes of whose enterprise have, occasionally, been interwoven in the party-coloured web of our narrative.

The captain effected his intention of establishing a trading post on the Portneuf, which he named Fort Hall. Here, for the first time, the American flag was unfurled to the breeze that sweeps the great naked wastes of the central wilderness. Leav-

ing twelve men here, with a stock of goods, to trade with the neighbouring tribes, he prosecuted his journey to the Columbia; where he established another post, called Fort Williams, on Wappatoo Island, at the mouth of the Wallamut. This was to be the head factory of his company; from whence they were to carry on their fishing and trapping operations, and their trade with the interior; and where they were to receive and despatch their annual ship.

The plan of Captain Wyeth appears to have been well concerted. He had observed that the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, the bands of free trappers, as well as the Indians west of the mountains, depended for their supplies upon goods brought from St. Louis; which, in consequence of the expenses and risks of a long land carriage, were furnished them at an immense advance on first cost. He had an idea that they might be much more cheaply supplied from the Pacific side. Horses would cost much less on the borders of the Columbia than at St. Louis: the transportation by land was much shorter; and through a country much more safe from the hostility of savage tribes; which, on the

route from and to St. Louis, annually cost the lives of many men.

On this idea, he grounded his plan. He combined the salmon fishery with the fur trade. A fortified trading post was to be established on the Columbia, to carry on a trade with the natives for salmon and peltries, and to fish and trap on their own account. Once a year, a ship was to come from the United States, to bring out goods for the interior trade, and to take home the salmon and furs which had been collected. Part of the goods, thus brought out, were to be despatched to the mountains, to supply the trapping companies and the Indian tribes, in exchange for their furs; which were to be brought down to the Columbia, to be sent home in the next annual ship; and thus an annual round was to be kept up. The profits on the salmon, it was expected, would cover all the expenses of the ship; so that the goods brought out, and the furs carried home, would cost nothing as to freight.

His enterprise was prosecuted with a spirit, intelligence, and perseverance, that merited success. All the details that we have met with, prove him to

be no ordinary man. He appears to have the mind to conceive, and the energy to execute extensive and striking plans. He had once more reared the American flag in the lost domains of Astoria; and had he been enabled to maintain the footing he had so gallantly effected, he might have regained for his country the opulent trade of the Columbia, of which our statesmen have negligently suffered us to be dispossessed.

It is needless to go into a detail of the variety of accidents and crosspurposes, which caused the failure of his scheme. They were such as all undertakings of the kind, involving combined operations by sea and land, are liable to.* What he most wanted, was sufficient capital to enable him to endure incipient obstacles and losses; and to hold on until success had time to spring up from disastrous experiments.

It is with extreme regret we learn that he has recently been compelled to dispose of his establishment, at Wappatoo Island, to the Hudson's Bay Company; who, it is but justice to say, have, according to his own account, treated him throughout the whole of his enterprise, with great fairness,

friendship, and liberality. That company, therefore, still maintains an unrivalled sway over the whole country washed by the Columbia and its tributaries. It has, in fact, as far as its chartered powers permit, followed out the splendid scheme contemplated by Mr. Astor, when he founded his establishment at the mouth of the Columbia. From their emporium of Vancouver, companies are sent forth in every direction, to supply the interior posts, to trade with the natives, and to trap upon the various streams. These thread the rivers, traverse the plains, penetrate to the heart of the mountains, extend their enterprises northward, to the Russian possessions, and southward, to the confines of California. Their yearly supplies are received by sea, at Vancouver; and thence their furs and peltries are shipped to London. They likewise maintain a considerable commerce, in wheat and lumber, with the Pacific islands, and to the north, with the Russian settlements.

Though the company, by treaty, have a right to a participation only, in the trade of these regions, and are, in fact, but tenants on sufferance; yet have they quietly availed themselves of the origi-

nal oversight, and subsequent supineness of the American government, to establish a monopoly of the trade of the river and its dependencies; and are adroitly proceeding to fortify themselves in their usurpation, by securing all the strong points of the country.

Fort George, originally Astoria, which was abandoned on the removal of the main factory to Vancouver, was renewed in 1830; and is now kept up as a fortified post and trading house. All the places accessible to shipping have been taken possession of, and posts recently established at them by the company.

The great capital of this association; their long established system; their hereditary influence over the Indian tribes; their internal organization, which makes every thing go on with the regularity of a machine; and the low wages of their people, who are mostly Canadians, give them great advantages over the American traders: nor is it likely the latter will ever be able to maintain any footing in the land, until the question of territorial right is adjusted between the two countries. The sooner that takes place, the better. It is a question too serious to

national pride, if not to national interest, to be slurred over; and every year is adding to the difficulties which environ it.

The fur trade, which is now the main object of enterprise west of the Rocky mountains, forms but a part of the real resources of the country. Beside the salmon fishery of the Columbia, which is capable of being rendered a considerable source of profit; the great valleys of the lower country, below the elevated volcanic plateau, are calculated to give sustenance to countless flocks and herds, and to sustain a great population of graziers and agriculturists.

Such, for instance, is the beautiful valley of the Wallamut; from which the establishment of Vancouver draws most of its supplies. Here, the company holds mills and farms; and has provided for some of its superannuated officers and servants. This valley, above the falls, is about fifty miles wide, and extends a great distance to the south. The climate is mild, being sheltered by lateral ranges of mountains; while the soil, for richness, has been equalled to the best of the Missouri lands.

The valley of the river Des Chutes, is also ad-

mirably calculated for a great grazing country. All the best horses used by the company for the mountains, are raised there. The valley is of such happy temperature, that grass grows there throughout the year, and cattle may be left out to pasture during the winter.

These valleys must form the grand points of commencement of the future settlement of the country; but there must be many such, infolded in the embraces of these lower regions of mountains; which, though at present they lie waste and uninhabited, and to the eye of the trader and trapper, present but barren wastes, would, in the hands of the skillful agriculturists and husbandmen, soon assume a different aspect, and teem with waving crops, or be covered with flocks and herds.

The resources of the country, too, while in the hands of a company restricted in its trade, can be but partially called forth: but in the hands of Americans, enjoying a direct trade with the East Indies, would be brought into quickening activity; and might soon realize the dream of Mr. Astor, in giving rise to a flourishing commercial empire.

Wreck of a Japanese junk on the northwest coast.

THE following extract of a letter which we received, lately, from Captain Wyeth, may be interesting, as throwing some light upon the question as to the manner in which America has been peopled.

“Are you aware of the fact, that in the winter of 1833, a Japanese junk was wrecked on the northwest coast, in the neighbourhood of Queen Charlotte’s island; and that all but two of the crew, then much reduced by starvation and disease, during a long drift across the Pacific, were killed by the natives? The two fell into the hands of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and were sent to England. I saw them, on my arrival at Vancouver, in 1834.”

INSTRUCTIONS

TO CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE FROM THE MAJOR-
GENERAL COMMANDING THE ARMY OF
THE UNITED STATES.

Head Quarters of the Army,
Washington, August 3, 1831.

SIR,

The leave of absence which you have asked, for the purpose of enabling you to carry into execution your design of exploring the country to the Rocky mountains and beyond, with a view of ascertaining the nature and character of the several tribes of Indians inhabiting those regions: the trade which might be profitably carried on with them: the quality of the soil, the productions, the minerals, the natural history, the climate, the geography and topography, as well as geology of the various parts

of the country within the limits of the territories belonging to the United States, between our frontier and the Pacific,—has been duly considered and submitted to the War Department for approval, and has been sanctioned. You are, therefore, authorized to be absent from the army until October, 1833. It is understood that the government is to be at no expense in reference to your proposed expedition, it having originated with yourself; and all that you required was the permission from the proper authority to undertake the enterprise. You will, naturally, in preparing yourself for the expedition, provide suitable instruments, and especially the best maps of the interior to be found.

It is desirable, besides what is enumerated as the object of your enterprise, that you note particularly the number of warriors that may be in each tribe or nation that you may meet with; their alliances with other tribes, and their relative position as to a state of peace or war, and whether their friendly or war-like dispositions towards each other are recent or of long standing. You will gratify us by describing the manner of their making war; of the mode of subsisting themselves during a state of war, and a

state of peace ; their arms, and the effect of them ; whether they act on foot or on horseback ; detailing the discipline and manœuvres of the war parties : the power of their horses, size, and general description : in short, every information which you may conceive would be useful to the government.

You will avail yourself of every opportunity of informing us of your position and progress, and at the expiration of your leave of absence, will join your proper station.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

ALEXANDER MACOMB,

Major-General, commanding the Army.

Capt. B. L. E. Bonneville,

7th Regt. of Infantry, New York.

THE FLATHEADS

AND THE

BLACKFEET.

A LARGE band of the Flathead warriors were encamped about the fort. They had recently returned from the buffalo country, and had revenged their defeat of the preceding year, by a signal victory over their enemies the Blackfeet; several of whose warriors, with their women, they had taken prisoners. M'Millan's tobacco and stock of trading goods had been entirely expended previous to my arrival, and the Indians were much in want of ammunition, &c. My appearance, or I should rather say, the goods I brought with me, was therefore a

source of great joy to both parties. The natives smoked the much-loved weed for several days successively. Our hunters killed a few mountain sheep, and I brought up a bag of flour, a bag of rice, plenty of tea and coffee, some arrow-root, and fifteen gallons of prime rum. We spent a comparatively happy Christmas, and, by the side of a blazing fire in a warm room, forgot the sufferings we endured in our dreary progress through the woods. There was, however, in the midst of our festivities, a great drawback from the pleasure we should have otherwise enjoyed. I allude to the unfortunate Blackfeet who had been captured by the Flatheads. Having been informed that they were about putting one of their prisoners to death, I went to their camp to witness the spectacle. The man was tied to a tree; after which they heated an old barrel of a gun until it became red hot, with which they burned him on the legs, thighs, neck, cheeks, and belly. They then commenced cutting the flesh from about the nails, which they pulled out, and next separated the fingers from the hand joint by joint. During the performance of these cruelties the wretched captive never winced, and instead of suing for

mercy, he added fresh stimulants to their barbarous ingenuity by the most irritating reproaches, part of which our interpreter translates as follows:—"My heart is strong.—You do not hurt me.—You can't hurt me.—You are fools.—You do not know how to torture.—Try it again.—I don't feel any pain yet. We torture your relations a great deal better, because we make them cry out aloud like little children.—You are not brave: you have small hearts, and you are always afraid to fight." Then addressing one in particular, he said, "It was by my arrow *you* lost *your* eye; upon which the Flathead darted at him, and with a knife in a moment scooped out one of his eyes; at the same time cutting the bridge of his nose nearly in two. This did not stop him: with the remaining eye he looked sternly at another, and said, "I killed *your* brother, and I scalped your old fool of a father." The warrior to whom this was addressed instantly sprung at him and separated the scalp from his head. He was then about plunging a knife in his heart, until he was told by the chief to desist. The raw skull, bloody socket, and mutilated nose, now presented a horrific appearance, but by no means changed his

tone of defiance.—“ It was I,” said he to the chief, “ that made your wife a prisoner last fall ;—we put out her eyes ;—we tore out her tongue ;—we treated her like a dog. Forty of our young warriors ——”

The chieftain became incensed the moment his wife’s name was mentioned : he seized his gun, and, before the last sentence was ended, a ball from it passed through the brave fellow’s heart, and terminated his frightful sufferings. Shocking, however, as this dreadful exhibition was, it was far exceeded by the atrocious cruelties practised on the female prisoners ; in which I am sorry to say the Flathead women assisted with more savage fury than the men. I only witnessed part of what one wretched young woman suffered, a detail of which would be too revolting for publicity. We remonstrated against the exercise of such horrible cruelties. They replied by saying the Blackfeet treated their relations in the same manner ; that it was the course adopted by all red warriors ; and that they could not think of giving up the gratification of their revenge to the foolish and womanish feelings of white men. Shortly after this we observed a young female led forth, apparently not more than fourteen or fifteen

years of age, surrounded by some old women who were conducting her to one end of the village, whither they were followed by a number of young men. Having learned the infamous intentions of her conquerors, and feeling interested for the unfortunate victim, we renewed our remonstrances ; but received nearly the same answer as before. Finding them still inflexible, and wishing to adopt every means in our power consistent with safety, in the cause of humanity, we ordered our interpreter to acquaint them, that, highly as we valued their friendship, and much as we esteemed their furs, we would quit their country for ever, unless they discontinued their unmanly and disgraceful cruelties to their prisoners. This had the desired effect, and the miserable captive was led back to her sorrowing group of friends. Our interference was nearly rendered ineffectual by the furious reproaches of the infernal old priestesses who had been conducting her to the sacrifice. They told the young warriors they were cowards, fools, and had not the hearts of fleas ; and called upon them in the names of their mothers, sisters, and wives, to follow the steps of their forefathers, and have their revenge on the dogs of Blackfeet. They

began to waver; but we affected not to understand what the old women had been saying. We told them that this act of self-denial on their part was peculiarly grateful to the white men; and that by it they would secure our permanent residence among them, and in return for their furs be always furnished with guns and ammunition sufficient to repel the attacks of their old enemies, and preserve their relations from being made prisoners. This decided the doubtful; and the chief promised faithfully that no more tortures should be inflicted on the prisoners, which I believe was rigidly adhered to, at least for that winter.

The Flatheads were formerly much more numerous than they were at this period; but owing to the constant hostilities between them and the Blackfoot Indians, their numbers had been greatly diminished. While pride, policy, ambition, self-preservation, or the love of aggrandisement, often deluges the civilized world with Christian blood; the only cause assigned by the natives of whom I write, for their perpetual warfare, is their love of buffalo. There are extensive plains to the eastward of the mountains frequented in the summer and autumnal months by

numerous herds of buffaloes. Hither the rival tribes repair to hunt those animals, that they may procure as much of their meat as will supply them until the succeeding season. In these excursions they often meet, and the most sanguinary conflicts follow.

The Blackfeet lay claim to all that part of the country immediately at the foot of the mountains, which is most frequented by the buffalo; and allege that the Flatheads, by resorting thither to hunt, are intruders whom they are bound to oppose on all occasions. The latter, on the contrary, assert, that their forefathers had always claimed and exercised the right of hunting on these "debateable lands;" and that while one of their warriors remained alive the right should not be relinquished. The consequences of these continual wars are dreadful, particularly to the Flatheads, who, being the weaker in numbers were generally the greater sufferers. Independently of their inferiority in this respect, their enemy had another great advantage in the use of fire-arms, which they obtained from the Company's trading posts established in the department of Forts des Prairies. To these the Flatheads had nothing

to oppose but arrows and their own undaunted bravery. Every year previous to our crossing the mountains witnessed the gradual diminution of their numbers; and total annihilation would shortly have been the consequence, but for our arrival with a plentiful supply of "villanous saltpetre." They were overjoyed at having an opportunity of purchasing arms and ammunition, and quickly stocked themselves with a sufficient quantity of both.

From this moment affairs took a decided change in their favour; and in their subsequent contests the numbers of killed, wounded, and prisoners, were more equal. The Blackfeet became enraged at this, and declared to our people at Forts des Prairies, that all white men who might happen to fall into their hands, to the westward of the mountains, would be treated by them as enemies, in consequence of their furnishing the Flatheads with weapons, which were used with such deadly effect against their nation. This threat, as will appear hereafter, was strictly put in execution. The lands of the Flatheads are well stocked with deer, mountain sheep, bears, wild fowl, and fish; and

when we endeavoured to induce them to give up such dangerous expeditions, and confine themselves to the produce of their own country, they replied, that their fathers had always hunted on the buffalo grounds; that they were accustomed to do the same thing from their infancy; and they would not now abandon a practice which had existed for several generations among their people.

With the exception of the cruel treatment of their prisoners (which, as it is general among all savages, must not be imputed to them as a peculiar vice), the Flatheads have fewer failings than any of the tribes I ever met with. They are honest in their dealings, brave in the field, quiet and amenable to their chiefs, fond of cleanliness, and decided enemies to falsehood of every description. The women are excellent wives and mothers, and their character for fidelity is so well established, that we never heard an instance of one of them proving unfaithful to her husband. They are also free from the vice of backbiting, so common among the lower tribes; and laziness is a stranger among them. Both sexes are comparatively very fair, and their complexions are a shade lighter than the palest new

copper after being freshly rubbed. They are remarkably well made, rather slender, and never corpulent. The dress of the men consists solely of long leggings, called *mittasses* by the Canadians, which reach from the ancles to the hips, and are fastened by strings to a leathern belt round the waist, and a shirt of dressed deer-skin, with loose hanging sleeves, which falls down to their knees. The outside seams of the leggings and shirt sleeves have fringes of leather. The women are covered by a loose robe of the same material reaching from the neck to the feet, and ornamented with fringes, beads, hawk-bells, and thimbles. The dresses of both are regularly cleaned with pipe-clay, which abounds in parts of the country; and every individual has two or three changes. They have no permanent covering for the head, but in wet or stormy weather shelter it by part of a buffalo robe, which completely answers all the purposes of a surtout. The principal chief of the tribe is hereditary; but from their constant wars, they have adopted the wise and salutary custom of electing, as their leader in battle, that warrior in whom the greatest portion of wisdom, strength, and bravery are combined. The election takes place

every year ; and it sometimes occurs that the general in one campaign becomes a private in the next. This "war-chief," as they term him, has no authority whatever when at home, and is as equally amenable as any of the tribe to the hereditary chief ; but when the warriors set out on their hunting excursions to the buffalo plains, he assumes the supreme command, which he exercises with despotic sway until their return. He carries a long whip with a thick handle decorated with scalps and feathers, and generally appoints two active warriors as *aides-de-camp*.

On their advance towards the enemy he always takes the lead ; and on their return he brings up the rear. Great regularity is preserved during the march ; and I have been informed by Mr. M'Donald, who accompanied some of these war parties to the field of action, that if any of the tribe fell out of the ranks, or committed any other breach of discipline, he instantly received a flagellation from the whip of the chieftain. He always acted with the most perfect impartiality, and would punish one of his subalterns for disobedience of orders with equal severity as any other offender. Custom, however,

joined to a sense of public duty, had reconciled them to these arbitrary acts of power, which they never complained of or attempted to resent. After the conclusion of the campaign, on their arrival on their own lands, his authority ceases; when the peace chief calls all the tribe together, and they proceed to a new election. There is no canvassing, caballing, or intriguing; and should the last leader be superseded, he retires from office with apparent indifference, and without betraying any symptoms of discontent. The fighting chief at this period had been five times re-elected. He was about thirty-five years of age, and had killed twenty of the Blackfeet in various battles, the scalps of whom were suspended in triumphal pride, from a pole at the door of his lodge. His wife had been captured by the enemy the year before, and her loss made a deep impression on him. He was highly respected by all the warriors for his superior wisdom and bravery; a consciousness of which, joined to the length of time he had been accustomed to command, imparted to his manners a degree of dignity which we never remarked in any other Indian. He would not take a second wife; and when the recol-

jection of the one he had lost came across his mind, he retired into the deepest solitude of the woods to indulge his sorrow, where some of the tribe informed us they often found him calling on her spirit to appear, and invoking vengeance on her conquerors. When these bursts of grief subsided, his countenance assumed a tinge of stern melancholy, strongly indicating the mingled emotions of sorrow and unmitigated hatred of the Blackfeet. We invited him sometimes to the fort, upon which occasions we sympathised with him on his loss; but at the same time acquainted him with the manner in which civilized nations made war. We told him that warriors only were made prisoners, who were never tortured or killed, and that no brave white man would ever injure a female or a defenceless man; that if such a custom had prevailed among them, he would now by the exchange of prisoners be able to recover his wife, who was by their barbarous system lost to him for ever; and if it were impossible to bring about a peace with their enemies the frightful horrors of war might at least be considerably softened by adopting the practice of the Europeans. We added that he had now a glorious opportunity of commencing the career of

magnanimity by sending home uninjured the captives he had made during the last campaign; that our friends on the other side of the mountains would exert their influence with the Blackfeet to induce them to follow his example and that ultimately it might be the means of uniting the two rival nations in the bonds of peace. He was at first opposed to making any advances; but on farther pressing he consented to make the trial, provided the hereditary chief and the tribe started no objections. On quitting us he made use of the following words: "My white friends you do not know the savage nature of the Blackfeet; they hope to exterminate our tribe; we are a great deal more numerous than we are; and were it not for our bravery, their object would have been long ago achieved. We shall now, according to your wishes, send back the prisoners; but remember, I tell you, that they will laugh at the interference of your relations beyond the mountains, and never spare a man, woman, or child, that they can take of our nation. Your exertions to save blood show you are good people. If they follow our example, we shall kill no more prisoners; but I tell you, they will laugh at you and call you fools."

We were much pleased at having carried our point so far; while he, true to his word, assembled the elders and warriors, to whom he represented the subject of our discourse, and after a long speech, advised them to make the trial, which would please their white friends, and show their readiness to avoid unnecessary cruelty. Such an unexpected proposition gave rise to an animated debate, which continued for some time; but being supported by a man for whom they entertained so much respect, it was finally carried; and it was determined to send home the Blackfeet on the breaking up of the winter. We undertook to furnish them with horses and provisions for their journey, or to pay the Flatheads a fair price for so doing. This was agreed to, and about the middle of March the prisoners took their departure tolerably well mounted, and with dried meat enough to bring them to their friends. Mr. M'Millan, who had passed three years in their country, and was acquainted with their language, informed them of the exertions we had used to save their lives, and prevent further repetitions of torture: and requested them particularly to mention the circumstance to their countrymen, in order that they might adopt a similar proceeding. We also wrote

letters by them to the gentlemen in charge of the different establishments at Forts des Prairies, detailing our success, and impressing on them the necessity of their attempting to induce the Blackfeet in their vicinity to follow the example set them by the Flat-heads. The lands of this tribe present a pleasing diversity of woods and plains, valleys and mountains, lakes and rivers. Besides the animals already mentioned, there are abundance of beavers, otters, martens, wolves, lynxes, &c.

The wolves of this district are very large and daring; and were in great numbers in the immediate vicinity of the fort, to which they often approached closely, for the purpose of carrying away the offals. We had a fine dog of mixed breed, whose sire was a native of Newfoundland, and whose dam was a wolf, which had been caught young, and domesticated by Mr. La Rocque, at Lac la Ronge, on the English river. He had many rencounters with his maternal tribe, in which he was generally worsted. On observing a wolf near the fort, he darted at it with great courage: if it was a male, he fought hard; but if a female, he either allowed it to retreat harmless, or commenced fondling it. He sometimes was absent for a week or ten days; and on his return, his

body and neck appeared gashed with wounds inflicted by the tusks of his male rivals in their amorous encounters in the woods. He was a noble animal, but always appeared more ready to attack a wolf than a lynx.

Our stock of sugar and molasses having failed, we were obliged to have recourse to the extract of birch to supply the deficiency. This was obtained by perforating the trunks of the birch trees in different places. Small slips of bark were then introduced into each perforation, and underneath kettles were placed to receive the juice. This was afterwards boiled down to the consistency of molasses, and was used with our tea as a substitute for sugar: it is a bitter sweet, and answered its purpose tolerably well.

The Flatheads are a healthy tribe, and subject to few diseases. Common fractures, caused by an occasional pitch off a horse, or a fall down a declivity in the ardour of hunting, are cured by tight bandages and pieces of wood like staves placed longitudinally around the part, to which they are secured by leathern thongs. For contusions they generally bleed, either in the temples, arms, wrists, or ankles, with pieces of sharp flint, or heads of arrows: they

however preferred being bled with the lancet, and frequently brought us patients, who were much pleased with that mode of operation. Very little snow fell after Christmas ; but the cold was intense, with a clear atmosphere. I experienced some acute rheumatic attacks in the shoulders and knees, from which I suffered much annoyance. An old Indian proposed to relieve me, provided I consented to follow the mode of cure practised by him in similar cases on the young warriors of the tribe. On inquiring the method he intended to pursue, he replied that it merely consisted in getting up early every morning for some weeks, and plunging into the river, and to leave the rest to him. This was a most chilling proposition, for the river was firmly frozen, and an opening to be made in the ice preparatory to each immersion.

I asked him, " Would it not answer equally well to have the water brought to my bedroom ? " But he shook his head, and replied, he was surprised that a young white chief, who ought to be wise, should ask so foolish a question. On reflecting, however, the rheumatism was a stranger among Indians, while numbers of our people were martyrs to it, and, above all, that I was upwards of three thousand miles from

any professional assistance, I determined to adopt the disagreeable expedient, and commenced operations the following morning. The Indian first broke a hole in the ice sufficiently large to admit us both, upon which he made a signal that all was ready. Enveloped in a large buffalo robe, I proceeded to the spot, and throwing off my covering, we both jumped into the frigid orifice together. He immediately commenced rubbing my shoulders, back, and loins : my hair in the mean time became ornamented with icicles ; and while the lower joints were undergoing their friction, my face, neck, and shoulders were incased in a thin covering of ice. On getting released I rolled a blanket about me, and ran back to the bedroom, in which I had previously ordered a good fire, and in a few minutes I experienced a warm glow all over my body. Chilling and disagreeable as these matinal ablutions were, yet, as I found them so beneficial, I continued them for twenty-five days, at the expiration of which my physician was pleased to say that no more were necessary, and that I had done my duty like a wise man. I was never after troubled with a rheumatic pain ! One of our old Canadians, who had been labouring many years under a chronic rheumatism, asked the Indian if he

could cure him in the same manner: the latter replied it was impossible, but that he would try another process. He accordingly constructed the skeleton of a hut about four and a half feet high, and three broad, in shape like a beehive, which he covered with deer-skins. He then heated some stones in an adjoining fire, and having placed the patient inside in a state of nudity, the hot stones were thrown in, and water poured on them: the entrance was then quickly closed, and the man kept in for some time until he begged to be released, alleging that he was nearly suffocated. On coming out he was in a state of profuse perspiration. The Indian ordered him to be immediately enveloped in blankets and conveyed to bed. This operation was repeated several times, and although it did not effect a radical cure, the violence of the pains was so far abated, as to permit the patient to follow his ordinary business, and to enjoy his sleep in comparative ease.

The Flatheads believe in the existence of a good and evil spirit, and consequently in a future state of rewards and punishments. They hold, that after death the good Indian goes to a country in which there will be perpetual summer; that he will meet his wife and children; that the rivers will abound

with fish, and the plains with the much-loved buffalo; and that he will spend his time in hunting and fishing, free from the terrors of war, or the apprehensions of cold or famine. The bad man, they believe, will go to a place covered with eternal snow; that he will always be shivering with cold, and will see fires at a distance which he cannot enjoy; water which he cannot procure to quench his thirst, and buffalo and deer which he cannot kill to appease his hunger. An impenetrable wood, full of wolves, panthers, and serpents, separates these "shrinking slaves of winter" from their fortunate brethren in the "meadows of ease." Their punishment is not however eternal, and according to the different shades of their crimes they are sooner or later emancipated, and permitted to join their friends in the Elysian fields.

Their code of morality, although short, is comprehensive. They say that honesty, bravery, love of truth, attention to parents, obedience to their chiefs, and affection for their wives and children, are the principle virtues which entitle them to the place of happiness, while the opposite vices condemn them to that of misery. They have a curious tradition with respect to beavers. They firmly believe that these animals are a fallen race of Indians, who, in conse-

quence of their wickedness, vexed the Good Spirit, and were condemned by him to their present shape ; but that in due time they will be restored to their humanity. They allege that he-beavers have the powers of speech ; and that they have heard them talk with each other, and seen them sitting in council on an offending member.

The lovers of natural history are already well acquainted with the surprising sagacity of these wonderful animals ; with their dexterity in cutting down trees, their skill in constructing their houses, and their foresight in collecting and storing provisions sufficient to last them during the winter months : but few are aware, I should imagine, of a remarkable custom among them, which, more than any other, confirms the Indians in believing them a fallen race. Towards the latter end of autumn a certain number, varying from twenty to thirty, assemble for the purpose of building their winter habitations. They immediately commence cutting down trees ; and nothing can be more wonderful than the skill and patience which they manifest in this laborious undertaking ; to see them anxiously looking up, watching the leaning of the tree when the trunk is nearly severed, and, when its creaking announces its approach-

ing fall, to observe them scampering off in all directions to avoid being crushed.

When the tree is prostrate they quickly strip it of its branches ; after which, with their dental chisels, they divide the trunk into several pieces of equal lengths, which they roll to the rivulet across which they intend to erect their house. Two or three old ones generally superintend the others ; and it is no unusual sight to see them beating those who exhibit any symptoms of laziness. Should, however, any fellow be incorrigible, and persist in refusing to work, he is driven unanimously by the whole tribe to seek shelter and provisions elsewhere. These outlaws are therefore obliged to pass a miserable winter, half starved in a burrow on the banks of some stream, where they are easily trapped. The Indians call them “ lazy beaver,” and their fur is not half so valuable as that of the other animals, whose persevering industry and *prévoyance* secure them provisions and a comfortable shelter during the severity of winter.

I could not discover why the *Blackfeet* and *Flat-heads* received their respective designations ; for the feet of the former are no more inclined to sable than any other part of the body, while the heads of the

latter possess their fair proportion of rotundity. Indeed it is only below the falls and rapids that real flatheads appear, and at the mouth of the Columbia that they flourish most supernaturally.

Cox's "Columbia River."—ENGLISH EDITOR.

THE END.

